■ NEWS / A5

Sandigan ruling clears way for Imelda's trial

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Bank exec testifies he saw Jaime Dichaves several times sign as Jose Velarde

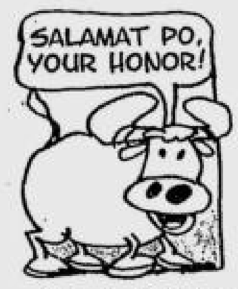
■ ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1

Inside the Inquirer: There's no business like show business

■ NEWS / A2

Cory Aquino family on the verge of losing Luisita

Davide: Judiciary's loss will be environment's gain


SALAMAT PO, YOUR HONOR!

By Armand N. Nocum

THE JUDICIARY'S LOSS will be the environment's gain.

Hosting a thanksgiving lunch to journalists 12 days before his retire-

DAVIDE/ A8

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, December 8, 2005 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. No. 363 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Gov't downplays Negroponte arrival: Nothing sinister to it

By Christine O. Avendano and Fe Zamora

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS YESTERDAY downplayed the visit of US top spook John Negroponte, in effect saying that there was nothing sinister to it.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that Malacañang had earlier been informed of

GOV'T/ A7

In search of heroes, nation hails SEAG athletes in parade

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THEY WERE MOBBED, photographed and showered with confetti. They signed autographs and stopped traffic.

The victorious Filipino athletes took to the streets yesterday and an ever-grateful, adoring throng embraced them like the heroes the nation badly needs.

Smiling and waving, the national athletes who reigned supreme in the just-concluded 23rd Southeast Asian Games paraded and filled the stretch of Ayala Avenue in Makati City, warm-

IN SEARCH/ A8

JM GUIAO PUNZALAN

UP AND ABOUT: Gymnast Emilie Crista Santos with coach Lily Donita and teammates get going.

THE GOLDEN HORDE of Filipino athletes holds a victory parade down Ayala Avenue to rousing cheers and showers of confetti from grateful, adoring crowds. They are mobbed and photographed. They stop traffic but no one grouses.

ERIK ARAZAS

Garci talks, says nothing

He admits speaking once with President

By Michael Lim Ubac and Philip C. Tubeza

INSTEAD OF AN EXpected closure to the "Hello Garci" controversy, Virgilio Garcillano's testimony yesterday before a House inquiry appeared to have made it an open-ended affair.

The former election commissioner, whose voice was caught in a wiretapped telephone conversation and nearly toppled the Arroyo presidency, set the uncertain tone of his much-awaited testimony.

He said in his opening remarks that he could not respond to questions on the wiretaps until the Supreme Court ruled on a petition he himself had filed last month just after he resurfaced after five months on the run.

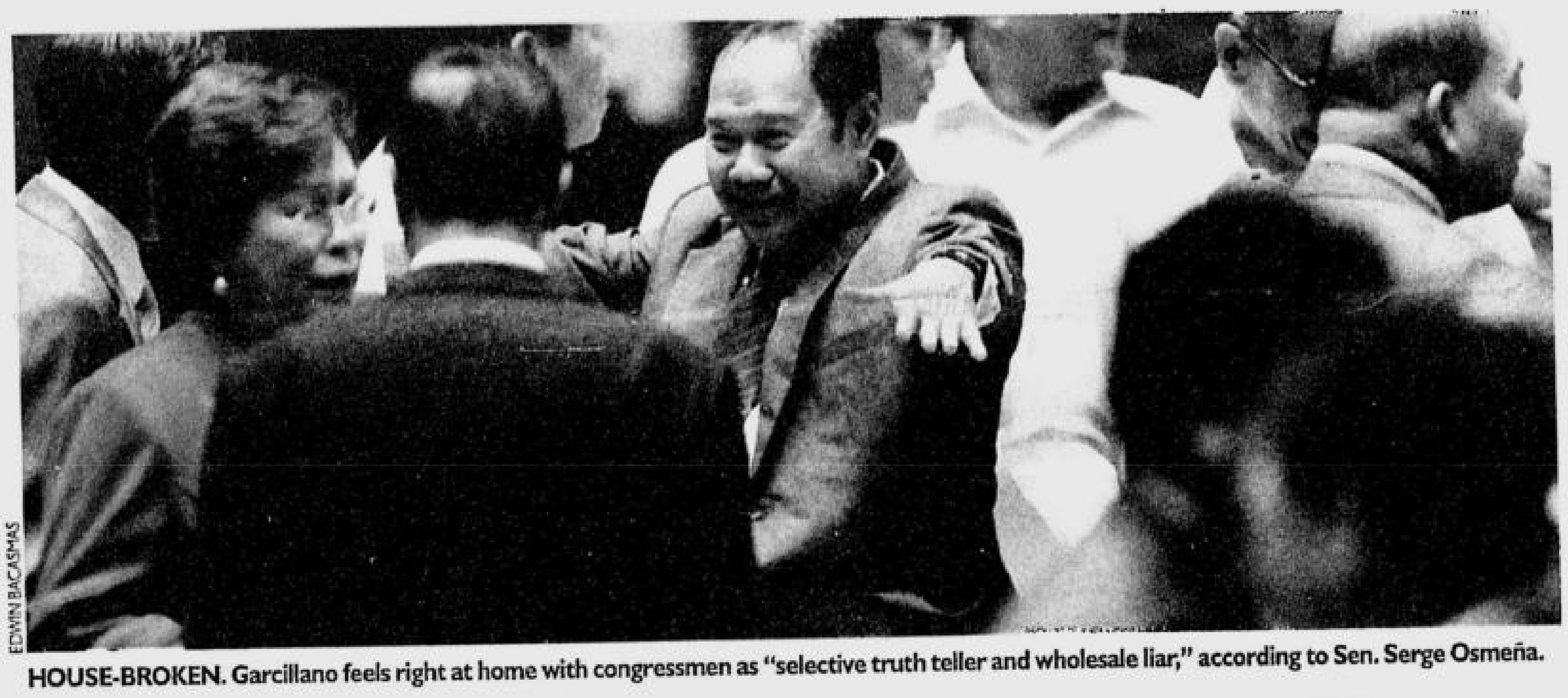
The petition questioned the admissibility of the audio recordings in congressional hearings.

Garcillano invoked the principle of sub judice in law, or gag rule while the case before the high tribunal had not been resolved. Congressmen during the hearing cited rulings declaring that this principle did not apply to hearings in aid of legislation.

Using another shield to deflect questions on the controversial tapes, the 68-year-old Garcillano demanded that the original wiretaps be produced and those behind them authenticate them.

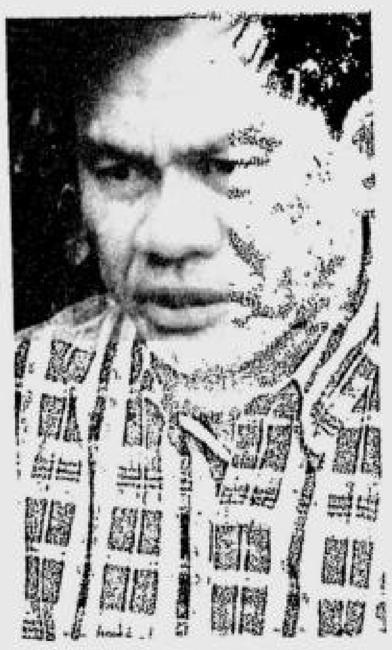
And he promised to produce

GARCI/ A6



EDWIN BACASMAS

HOUSE-BROKEN. Garcillano feels right at home with congressmen as "selective truth teller and wholesale liar," according to Sen. Serge Osmeña.



SAMUEL Ong emerges with 4 tapes

GMA called Garci 15 times, says Nene

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo's 15 calls to former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano from May 26 to June 10, 2004, resulted in the massive padding of votes for her, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. claimed yesterday.

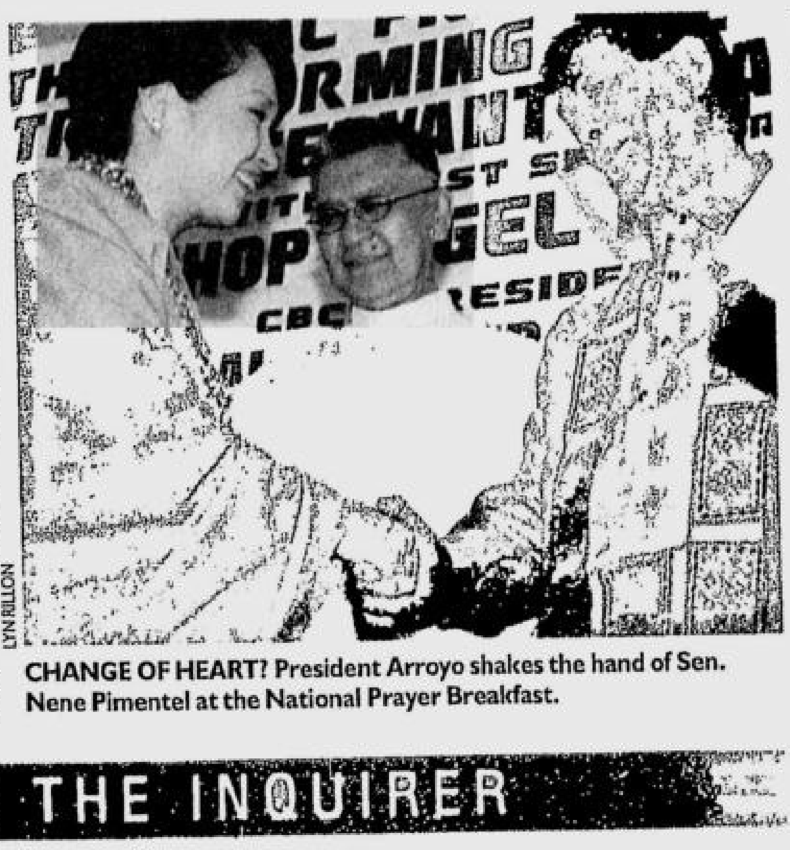
In the course of a privilege speech delivered hours after Garcillano began his testimony in the House, Pimentel aired in the Senate session hall the supposed phone conversations that, he said, resulted in the *dagdag-bawas* (vote-padding and -shaving) that paved the way for Congress' proclamation of Ms Arroyo as President.

Pimentel made a presentation showing how the administration, with the help of Garcillano, supposedly used tampered certificates of canvass (COCs) and shaved off votes from opposition standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr. to obtain the one-million margin Ms Arroyo had wanted.

He said the opposition had copies of the tampered or manufactured election returns.

Pimentel said that in select areas

GMA CALLED/ A6



LYN RILLON

CHANGE OF HEART? President Arroyo shakes the hand of Sen. Nene Pimentel at the National Prayer Breakfast.

Most of GMA critics snub prayer breakfast for unity

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANY OF THE POLITICAL PERsonalities invited to a prayer breakfast, which could have provided the needed push toward national reconciliation, did not show up at the gathering yesterday.

Only a handful were in attendance led by President Macapagal-Arroyo, former President Fidel Ramos, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Muntinlupa Rep. Rufino Biazon, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, Justice Reynato Puno and evangelical church leaders.

Other opposition luminaries like former President Corazon Aquino, House Speaker Jose de Venecia and evangelist Bro. Mike Velarde, leader of the Catholic lay movement El Shaddai, were no-shows.

So were Ms Arroyo's critics like Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Representatives Francis Escudero and Alan Peter Cayetano, members of the "Hyatt 10," the Cabinet and bureau officials who quit and sought the President's resignation, and Bro. Eddie Villanueva,

MOST OF/ A6

Ong comes out, enraged at Garci 'lies'

By DJ Yap

AFTER SEVEN MONTHS IN hiding, whistle-blower Samuel Ong appeared yesterday on the rooftop of an abandoned building and declared he would surrender original "Hello Garci" tapes never heard before if criminal charges against him were dropped.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon told reporters that Ong, a former deputy chief of the National Bureau of Investigation, had given him copies of the recordings and other supporting evidence.

Biazon said the materials would be presented today when

ONG COMES/ A7

Mike A's bldg. strafed; Puno car bombed

By Tarra V. Quismundo, DJ Yap, Jocelyn R. Uy and Nancy Carvajal

A BUILDING OWNED BY THE husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo in Makati was strafed before dawn yesterday.

Hours later three bombs exploded separately in Quezon City, Parañaque and Caloocan City, damaging a van owned by a son of Rep. Ronaldo "Ronnie" Puno, a sports utility vehicle (SUV) belonging to the owner of Rounce Printing Corp. and another SUV

MIKE/ A8

INSIDE THE INQUIRER

Opinion Section: Marketplace of clashing ideas

By Ciriaco Cinco Jr.
Assistant Opinion Editor

WHEN THE "HELLO GARCI" scandal seemed just about to break the Arroyo administration apart and plunge the nation deeper into the pit of uncertainty in July, the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference (BBC) sought a civil way to solve the crisis and calm public passions. It proposed the creation of a Truth Commission—to determine once and for all whether or not President Macapagal-Arroyo and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano did indeed rig the 2004 presidential elections.

To ensure that the body's composition would be credible and acceptable to the public, BBC's cochair Ricardo Pascua suggested that it be headed by former Election Chair Christian Monsod. For members, he ticked off six names: retired Supreme Court Justice Isagani Cruz, noted Constitution expert Fr. Joaquin Bernas, former Ambassador and Air Force and Customs chief Ramon Farolan, University of the Philippines sociology professor Randy David, historian Michael Mastura, and human rights lawyer Romeo Capulong.

Four of those named—Cruz, Bernas, Farolan and David—are INQUIRER columnists. It might not have been Pascua's intent but he

OPINION/ A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2005

Second FRONT PAGE

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Northern Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. These will become frequent rains which may trigger flashfloods and landslides over Bicol region. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY: CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/12/08/05 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

No oil price hikes up to yearend

By Abigail L. Ho

DESPITE THE RECENT CLIMB IN world oil prices, the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (Ippca) has committed not to implement any increase in pump price up to the end of the year.

Ippca chair Fernando Martinez assured motorists that they would not be subjected to any additional burden this coming holiday season, even as regional finished product prices had started to come close to or even breach the $60-a-barrel mark.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude had gone up to a December average of $52.60 a barrel from the November average of $$51.39 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products had likewise started to climb to an average of $58.72 a barrel in the first six days of December.

MOPS-based diesel averaged $62.60 a barrel in the Dec. 1-6 period from $64.84 a barrel in November.

In a separate interview, Ippca president Glenn Yu said international prices had started to climb again due to forecasts of colder weather in the United States.

"The US Weather Service is predicting colder-than-usual weather in the US in the next two weeks. The market is reacting to that forecast," he said.

As this was the case, he said it was difficult to tell whether the oil firms could sustain the successive price reductions that they had been implementing these past several weeks.

Since the start of November, local oil firms had been reducing pump prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene to reflect softening world oil prices.

Cory family on the verge of losing Luisita

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE FAMILY OF FORMER PRESIDENT Corazon Cojuangco Aquino is only one step away from finally losing its vast sugar estate in Tarlac province with a special committee of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) voting to scrap the 16-year-old stock distribution option (SDO) adopted by the Cojuangcos and estate workers.

Voting 5 to 1, the PARC validating committee upheld the recommendation of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to cancel the SDO and to acquire the 4,915-hectare estate for distribution to its workers.

The PARC, the highest decision-making body on agrarian reform issues, created the inter-agency validating committee to review the DAR decision to revoke the Luisita SDO agreement.

The council, which approves all SDO schemes, under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, has the final say on SDO revocations.

The Department of Justice, which chairs the validation committee, the DAR, Office of the President, the Cooperative Development Authority and the farmer representative all voted in favor of scrapping the Luisita SDO agreement.

Lone dissenter

The Land Bank of the Philippines, represented by lawyer Vicky Reyes, dissented, arguing that the Hacienda Luisita management had complied with the requirements of the SDO agreement.

The rest of the committee members—Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Agriculture and the landowner representative—failed to present their position.

"Even if they vote to keep the SDO, it would not change the decision because the five votes for the scrapping of the SDO already represent the majority," a source from the PARC said yesterday.

The validation committee convened at the DAR central office in Quezon City Tuesday to decide on the Luisita SDO issue, which has been pending before the PARC since October.

The Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) and the Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid ng Hacienda Luisita, along with the supervisors' group, submitted their final arguments on the case last week.

The source said the committee members read their respective position papers on the final arguments of the two parties before casting their vote.

The DOLE representative had asked for more time to prepare its official statement while the DA and landowner representatives were absent. The landowner representative, Eduardo Hernandez, was in New Zealand but had reserved his right to vote.

Justice Undersecretary Ernesto L. Pineda, who chaired the committee meeting, said the voting was "not yet finished" and that the committee has yet to prepare its draft resolution on the Luisita case.

"There is no official draft. We will prepare it next week. The voting is not yet finished," Pineda said in the text message.

A copy of a 21-page draft resolution was, however, released to media by a very reliable sources who asked not to be named.

Resolution recalled

"The HLI avers that it has not been earning for the last several years. This is unfortunate because then the SDP undoubtedly failed to satisfy the one of the essential criteria requisite of the SDO acceptance—that the plan for stock distributions to qualified beneficiaries would result in increased income and greater benefits to them, than if the lands were divided and distributed to them individually or collectively," the draft resolution read.

"The PARC resolution No. 89-12-2, a resolution which approved the assailed stock distribution plan of Tarlac Development Corp./Hacienda Luisita Inc. is hereby recalled and set aside," it said.

The grounds for recall cited by the draft resolution were similar to those given by the DAR in its terminal report on the issue.

However, it did not specify that the Cojuangco estate be distributed through a collective certificate of land ownership award as recommended by the DAR.

Edgar Beltran, a lawyer for 150 individual farmers in the hacienda, said the report was merely a "legally strengthened" version of the DAR's terminal report.

"It strengthened the procedural aspect of the case, in case the decision is questioned before the Supreme Court," Beltran said.

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Dr. Cervantes trained in Internal Medicine and in Gastroenterology at St. Luke's Medical Center; in Clinical and Interventional Hepatology at Tohoku University, Japan; in Transplant Hepatology at the Starzl Transplant Institute, University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania; and in Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) at Radionics Singapore. Completed RFA Master Class in Milan, Italy under the RFA pioneers Dr. Solbiati and Dr. Livraghi. Member, American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, International Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association, and International Liver Transplantation Society. President, Philippine Association for the Study of Liver Diseases. President, Philippine Foundation for Liver Diseases. She is the most experienced doctor in performing RFA of liver tumors in the Philippines, with over 200 procedures done, and her RFA team is one of the most aggressive in the world in ablating large liver tumors. She is the only Hepatologist formally trained in Transplant Hepatology in the Philippines. Dr. Cervantes is one of the best liver and digestive disease specialists in the country today.

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Drilon acceptable to united opposition as transition president – Sotto

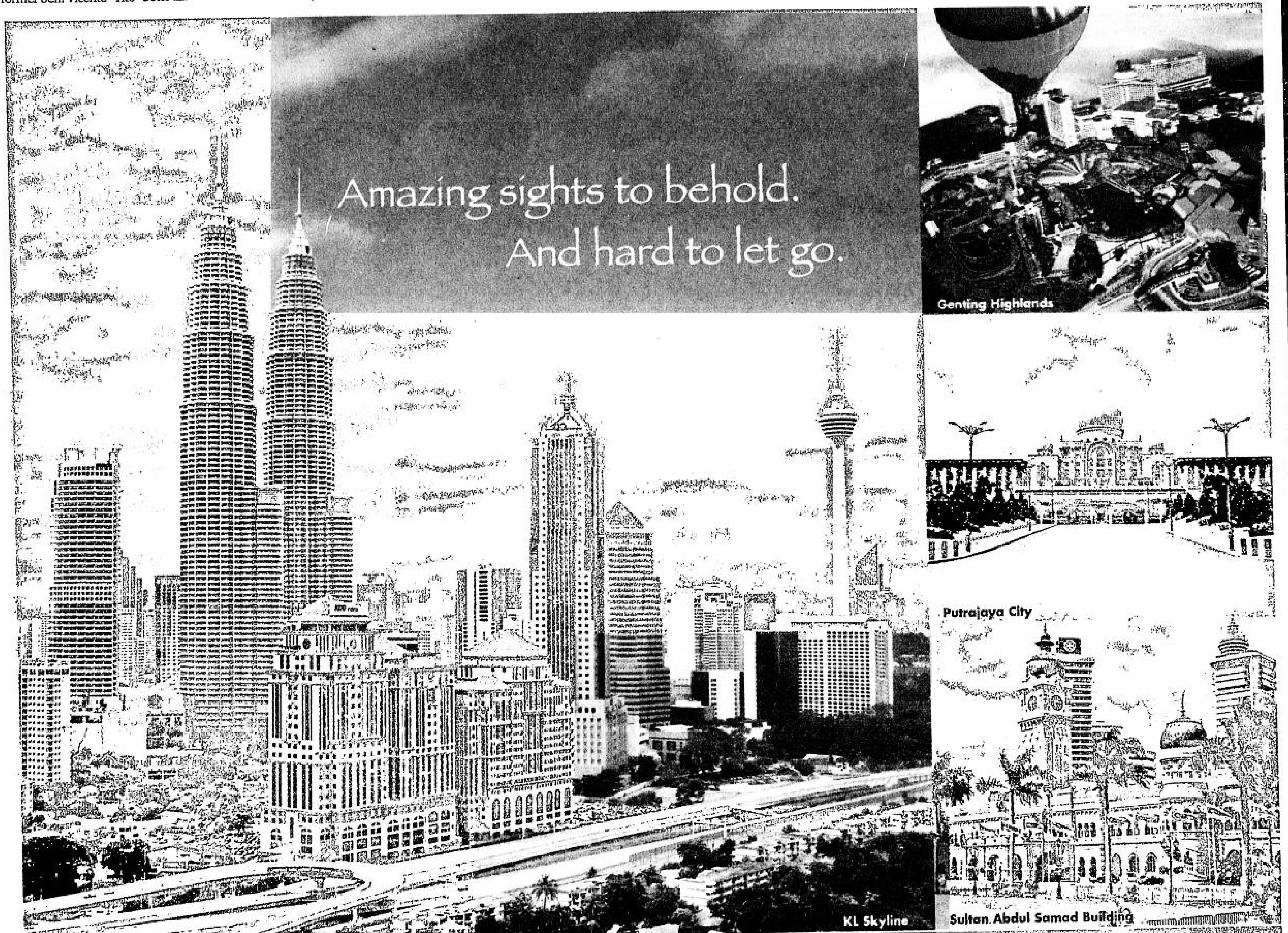
THE UNITED OPPOSITION IS NOW OPEN to having Senate President Franklin Drilon sit as transition president once President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro are "removed" from power, according to former Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto III.

"On a personal note and I could probably say some other members of the opposition that if there will be a transitory council and Drilon will be the leader to call for elections within the next six months, we will agree," said Sotto, one of the UNO convenors and campaign manager of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

UNO has called for a transitory council to take over once the presidency is vacated.

Sotto said he and other UNO leaders would agree to Drilon as transition president because they believe he would comply with the constitutional requirement to call for elections.

The Black and White Movement, composed of civil society members, the so-called Hyatt 10 Cabinet members who resigned and backed by former President Corazon Aquino, had given a "deadline" for De Castro to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo and lead the country, an offer the Vice President rejected when the deadline lapsed at the end of November.



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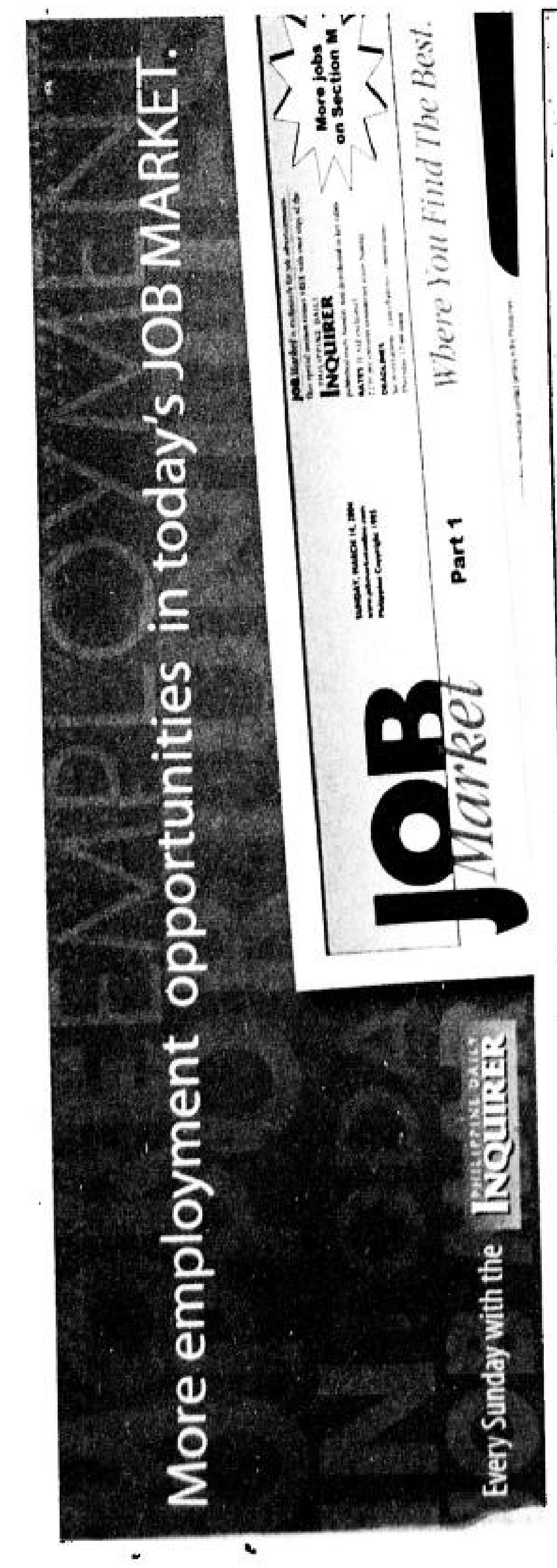

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Part 1

LYN CHING-PASCUAL:

"I'm down to a *sexy size 4* and have never been happier!"

A year after childbirth and after only two months of regular treatments at Marie France, TV host Lyn Ching Pascual is at her slimmest, healthiest, one of the happiest periods of her life.

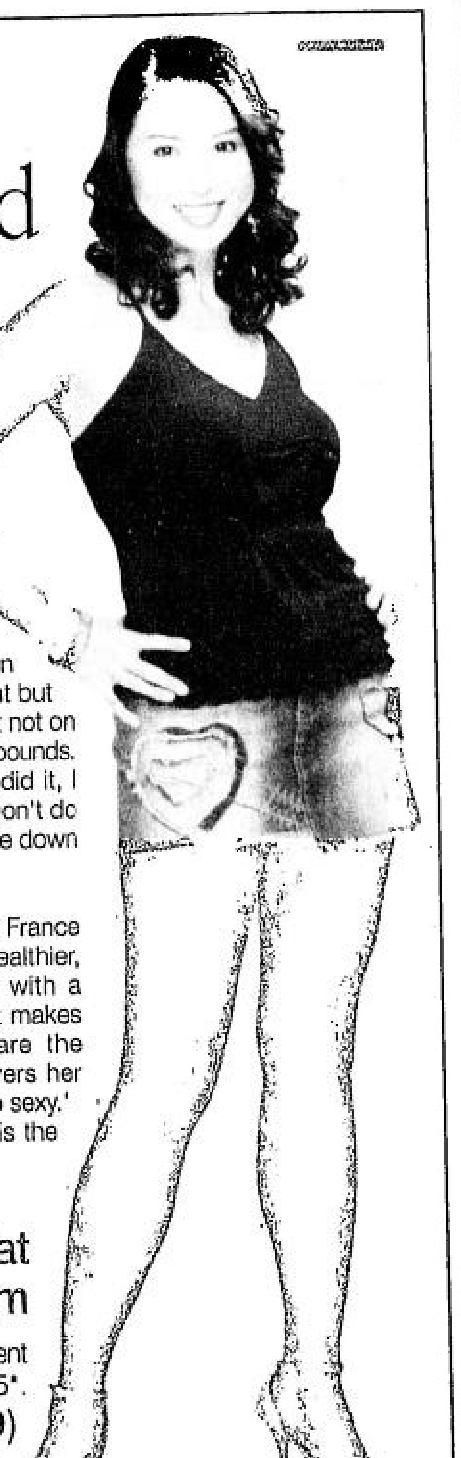
Why wouldn't she be? According to Lyn, she's been fat all her life. "I was an obese child. I weighed 140 lbs when I was only 10 years old. It was so bad it got to a point that my skin gave up on me. I had stretch marks particularly on the legs – at 10 years old! Imagine that!" For a kid, that was really a physical and emotional toll. She says she's been bullied, teased, and she could not engage in sports, which made it even harder for her to lose weight.

When she got older, Lyn went through different weight-loss methods. "Yo-yo dieting...gym (I'd workout religiously for months, then stop)...badminton (I'd play everyday, lose weight, and then stop)...it even got to a point when I became bulimic," confesses Lyn. "And I was on the verge of anorexia because I already refused to eat. I was at my thinnest then: 111 lbs. But I looked sick. I looked really, really sick: dry skin...I wasn't moving too much because I was always tired...I can't breathe well...I had a lot of problems at that time. Plus, I really love eating food! That's why it's so hard for me to go on a diet."

That's why she couldn't be happier when she enrolled at Marie France. "I lost a lot of weight even if I still overeat. I actually have a sweet tooth so I eat 2 bags of caramel popcorn everyday – and I never miss a day. I'm like, Marie France is making sure that I get thin anyway, so I really don't watch what I eat. So I'm really surprised with the result of my Marie France treatments. And I'm very happy because I can still eat whatever I want!"

She adds, "Their treatments are very easy, very fast, very safe, and very convenient for me. After the show *(Unang Hirit)*, which ends at around 8:30-8:45 a.m., I go straight to Marie France. They open early so there's really no problem regarding schedule. It's very convenient because whatever I wear when I arrive, I can also wear when I leave. I don't have to take a bath or even take some time to rest after a really, really heavy workout. There's no workout. It's really convenient for nursing mothers like me because I can immediately hold my baby when I get home (which is only about 10 minutes from the center) since I'm not tired. At Marie France, you just lie down and everyone else has to work for you. Where can you get that kind of deal? Literally, you just lie down and you lose weight. What more can I ask for!"

Indeed, Lyn is a picture of true satisfaction. With a figure that has transformed from, according to her, "a huge American size 10" to "a sexy size 4"...who wouldn't be? "Now I can wear sexy clothes!" she exclaims. "It feels good to know that you can really lose weight if you want to."



Now everybody's asking how she did it. "Everyday I get compliments. People from the audience, people from the show, even a close friend of mine says, 'I have never seen you this thin before.' That's because before, when I used to workout a lot, I lost weight but I looked bulky. I lost on pounds but not on inches. Now I lose both inches and pounds. And whenever people ask how I did it, I always tell them – Marie France! Don't do anything, just Marie France. Just lie down at Marie France!"

With her new, slimmer Marie France body, she's more active, feels healthier, and looks much younger even with a 1-year old daughter in tow. What makes her really happy, of course, are the compliments her husband showers her everyday. "He says, 'My wife is so sexy.' Next to 'I love you', that for me is the best thing I hear him say."

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Admission inadmissible, GI's lawyer says

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

AN ADMISSION MADE BY AN American soldier to US Navy investigators that he had sex with a Filipina inside a van at the Subic Bay Freeport last November cannot be used in the preliminary investigation being conducted by the Olongapo City prosecutor of rape charges filed by the woman against six US Marines, the soldier's Filipino lawyer said yesterday.

Lawyer Benjamin Formoso said his client, Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, was without a lawyer when interrogated by the US Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), and this violated the Miranda Doctrine requiring the presence of legal counsel during such interrogations. Smith is one of the six US marines implicated in the case.

"Even if he made an admission, his statements would not hold," Formoso told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Earlier, Olongapo City Prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni revealed the main content of the report by the NCIS, which is conducting a separate investigation of the case. The NCIS is the agency within the Department of the Navy that conducts criminal investigations of US Navy or Marine personnel.

NCIS resident in charge Ronald Beltz began coordinating with Jalandoni through a letter dated Nov. 14 in which he assured the Olongapo prosecutor that the NCIS "stands ready to assist the Philippine authorities in the search for justice in this matter."

Jalandoni said the NCIS reported that Smith had admitted having sex with the 22-year-old Filipina inside a van at the Subic Bay Freeport but that he had done it without using force.

According to Jalandoni, Smith told the NCIS that his five co-accused were in the van at the time and that they "cheered" him on as he and the woman had sex on the vehicle's back seat.

The report, furnished by the NCIS in the third week of November, is now with Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño.

Useless as evidence

Smith's full written statement has not yet been turned over to the Department of Justice, which was why it could not be used during the case's preliminary investigation, Jalandoni said.

Jalandoni and his co-investigating prosecutor were expected to come out with a resolution after Dec. 15 when the lawyers of the woman and the soldiers are due to submit their respective memoranda on the complaint filed by the woman last Nov. 3.

Formoso said he was not aware of the NCIS report until after the media had reported it. However, he said he would not seek a copy of the report because it "cannot be used as evidence."

On Smith's claim of having consensual sex with the woman, Formoso said: "The law does not punish consensual sex with a girl who's 18 years old and above."

Smith appeared to be the main suspect based on van driver Timoteo Soriano Jr.'s sworn statement that the soldier sat next to the woman.

Soriano, whom Jalandoni has classified as an accomplice, was expected to submit his counter-affidavit on Dec. 9.

Of the six accused soldiers, it was only Smith who has not submitted his counter-affidavit. Formoso waived his client's right to submit a counter-affidavit in the Nov. 29 hearing on the ground that the information and evidence were being presented "piecemeal."

Citing Section 1, Rule 115 of the Rules of Court, Formoso said the "silence of the accused should not be construed against him so the nonsubmission of affidavit of Smith should not affect the presumption of innocence."

He said Smith committed "no crime" as three of the soldiers—Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier and Lance Cpls. Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis—denied committing rape or "gang rape."

Lance Cpl. Albert Lara and Cpl. Corey Burris claimed they were not inside the van but were walking toward their ship, the USS Essex, which was docked at the Subic Bay Freeport's Alava Pier, at the time the alleged rape took place.

ROGER MARGALLO

ACCIDENTAL SHOOTING
Gaudiosa Villanueva, a treasury employee based at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, is carried away to the Naia clinic after she was hit by a bullet accidentally fired by an off-duty policeman at Terminal 1. Police Officer 2 Gregorio Gale (left), who was at the airport to see his wife off, was removing the magazine of his .45-caliber pistol for inspection at the departure area when it accidentally went off. Three other civilians, including two passengers were wounded in the incident.

Bank exec says Erap pal owned Velarde account

By Nelson F. Flores

FORMER PRESIDENT ESTRADA does not own the controversial P3.2-billion Jose Velarde account at the Equitable PCIBank, a senior official of the bank testified yesterday at the deposed leader's Sandiganbayan plunder trial.

EPCIB senior executive Romuald Dytang claimed to have witnessed on several occasions ethnic Chinese businessman Jaime Dichaves, Estrada's friend, sign as Jose Velarde in the withdrawal slips from the controversial account.

The Special Division, however, rejected Dytang's testimony and ordered the court stenographer and recorder to strike it out of the court records.

The court noted that the questions concerning the Velarde signature were not among the reasons cited by the defense panel in its motion to recall Dytang as a witness.

The court also noted that signing a withdrawal slip and the authentication of the directional letter are two different things.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, who had tried to prevent the recall of Dytang, could not have been more delighted with the court's decision.

Estrada lawyer Jose Flaminiano informed the court that he would file a motion for reconsideration within 15 days.

He argued that since the deposed President was facing an offense punishable by death, in the interest of justice the court should allow Dytang's testimony.

Flaminiano said that he asked for Dytang's recall to prove the existence of the Aug. 25, 1999 directional letter sent by Dichaves to EPCIB requesting the opening of an alias account under the name of Jose Velarde.

He said that Dytang allowed Dichaves to make withdrawals from the Velarde account because of the directional letter and the fact that Dytang saw Dichaves sign as Jose Velarde on a number of occasions.

Flaminiano said these facts clearly established that the Velarde account was owned by Dichaves.

He said he regretted that this fact did not surface in open court when Dytang was first presented in court.

Last May, Dytang testified that Dichaves had requested to open the Velarde account through a directional letter.

The original copy of the directional letter has been missing. Only photocopies have been made available to the court and the prosecution and defense panels.

Christmas truce with Reds in doubt

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY said the communist New People's Army has intensified its attacks on the government over the past two months, putting into doubt the government's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire this Christmas.

Executive Secretary Ermita said the government was having second thoughts about declaring the traditional Christmas truce because of the increasing aggression of the insurgents.

Ermita said intelligence reports have indicated that the NPA has become a "heightened threat to the nation."

"Our records will show that there were more violent activities in the past 60 days and that is because they want to prove they are still a force to contend with," Ermita told a press briefing.

"Since June this year, they have not hidden the fact they got orders from their leader Jose Ma. Sison after talks have been suspended to intensify their violent activities," he said.

Ermita said the communists have mainly targeted remote police and military outposts although he said he could not discount the wave of bomb and other destabilization threats plaguing Metro Manila and the provinces being part of the communist strategy to bring down the government.

Ermita said 97 prominent members of the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines are on the run because of the government's suspension of immunity guarantees for those participating in the peace talks.

Even Sison has been facing difficulties in his exile in the Netherlands after the European Union declared two weeks ago that the CPP-NPA has been officially included in the EU list of terrorist organizations.

"I recall that only Canada and the US declared the CPP-NPA as part of the terror group in 2003. They (the EU) is quite active now in pursuing Sison because he is facing charges in the Philippines," Ermita said.

Negotiations between the government and the CPP-NPA broke down early this year over the insurgents' demand that the Philippine government work to have their organizations removed from the US and EU list of terrorist groups. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 8, 2005
Immaculate Conception

1st Reading:	Gen 3:9-15,20
2nd Reading:	Eph 1:3-6,11-12
Gospel:	Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary

What have we done? Each of us was conceived in the 'eye' of God as some folk say and dreamed into flesh and blood. We were conceived by our God with an 'original face' of holiness and freedom and in Jesus we were chosen and blessed before the creation of the world to be holy and without sin in his presence. We were conceived in love to be the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus. The woman Mary was conceived in this way and as a believer said "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." Like other handmaids before her, Moses, David, Isaiah and her son Jesus her word is given along with her body and her life to the blessing and praise of God and obedience to the will of God. What did God conceive us to be? Pray with Mary to submit to the Word made flesh among us and live in the freedom of God's children.

Gov't leases Tokyo property for ₱240 M

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT HAS LEASED for ¥480 million (about P240 million) its real estate property in Nampeidai district in Tokyo, Japan, to property developer Nagayama Taisei Consortium.

The Department of Finance has issued a notice of award to Nagayama for the 2,489-square-meter Nampeidai property, which the consortium would lease for a period of 50 years.

Finance Undersecretary Gabriel "Jay" Singson Jr., in charge of the government's privatization efforts, said the notice of award of the Japanese property, whose disposition had been planned years ago, was an indication of the government's renewed focus on privatizing state assets for revenue generation.

After the 50-year lease contract, the property will be returned to the Philippine government.

Consular office

Nagayama will build on the property a ¥1.7 billion building , 22 percent of which will be reserved for the exclusive use of the Philippine government. The latter could use it for business, but it has plans to make it consular office.

At present, a four-story building sits on the property, but officials said it has already deteriorated and has become an eyesore. The Nampeidai property has been vacated after the Philippine embassy transferred to the Roponggi district, also in Tokyo, during the time of President Joseph Estrada.

The interagency bids and awards committee (BAC)—composed of the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Budget and Management, and Office of the President—recommended the awarding of the lease contract to Nagayama as early as June this year.

The recommendation by the BAC came after its members decided that Nagayama's bid was better than that of the other bidder, Urban Development Corp.

Sandiganbayan ruling clears way for Imelda's trial

THE SANDIGANBAYAN ON WEDNESDAY said it had enough evidence for an ill-gotten wealth case against former First Lady Imelda Marcos following a P200-billion lawsuit filed by the government.

But the anti-graft court cleared the three children of Imelda and late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, as well as her son-in-law Gregorio Araneta, lifting a freeze on his properties. Araneta is married to Irene Marcos, the youngest of the Marcos children.

Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Gregory Ong said Mrs. Marcos had acknowledged in 1993 that her family held properties and bank accounts suspected by the government of having been acquired illegally.

Prima facie case

"We find that the evidence presented by the plaintiff constitutes a prima facie case against Imelda Marcos," Ong said in a 120-page resolution, adding the funds and properties were "grossly disproportionate" to the family's stated income.

The ruling clears the way for a trial to start, but no dates have been set.

Mrs. Marcos, 76, denies any wrongdoing during her husband's 21-year rule, which was ended by a "people power" uprising in 1986. The government accuses the Marcoses of amassing up to $10 billion in cash, property, art works and jewelry.

Mrs. Marcos, famous for her collection of 1,200 pairs of shoes and seen frequently at social events around Manila, faces dozens of civil and criminal cases.

The government hopes to auction millions of dollars worth of jewelry confiscated in Manila and Honolulu after the Marcoses fled into exile in Hawaii, but previous attempts have been blocked by lawsuits filed by Mrs. Marcos.

Court documents show that on Nov. 22, 1993, Mrs. Marcos agreed with the list of the properties in the government's complaint but claimed they were "lawfully acquired."

But the court said that, based on income tax payments of the Marcoses from 1966 to 1985, they claimed a taxable income of P13.81 million.

MARCOS

The lawsuit was filed by the Philippine government in July 1987, shortly after the Marcoses fled to Hawaii. Ferdinand Marcos died there in 1989 and Imelda Marcos returned to the Philippines in 1991, running unsuccessfully for president in 1992.

The government alleges the Marcos family confiscated private property, awarded contracts to relatives and business associates, embezzled government funds and extorted money from businessmen.

It says the wealth was funneled to various local and offshore bank accounts.

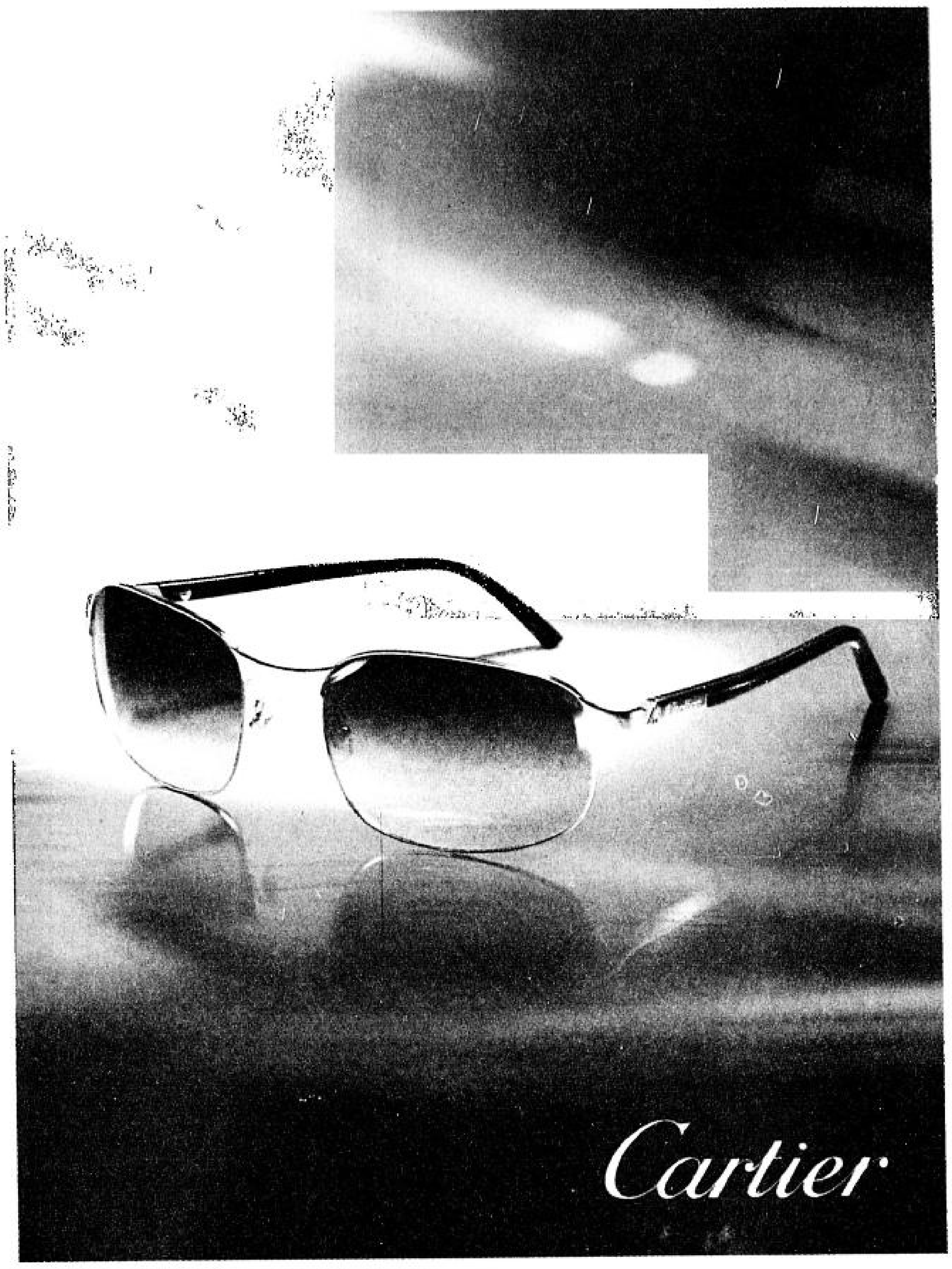
Insufficient evidence

But the court found insufficient evidence to support the same allegations against the three Marcos children – Imee Marcos, an opposition member of Congress; Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., the governor of Ilocos Norte province; and Irene Marcos-Araneta.

The government alleges that Mrs. Marcos owns 33 residential properties across the Philippines and 21,700 hectares of farm land with a combined value of P51 million.

Government investigators have also said they found records of offshore deposits amounting to $292 million and stock investments abroad assessed at $98 million.

They said there were several properties in the United States and London, and nearly 180 paintings by masters such as Picasso, Goya, Matisse and Michaelangelo. Reuters



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Aramco eyes 2nd refinery in RP

DHARAN, SAUDI ARABIA – SAUDI ARAMCO, the biggest oil company in the Middle East which owns 40 percent of Petron, is interested in setting up a $5 billion oil refinery in Mindanao that could supply the oil requirements of East Asia and the US Pacific Coast, House Speaker Jose de Venecia reported yesterday.

De Venecia made the disclosure in a press statement after a meeting with Saudi Aramco president Abdullah Saleh Jummah in the course of a tour of Saudi Aramco's headquarters here.

De Venecia said Jummah informed him he had already instructed Petron-Aramco to undertake a feasibility study on the proposed refinery in Mindanao.

The feasibility study would take some and it would take at least three years to construct the refinery, said Ed Mañalac, head of the Philippine Oil Company (PNOC) who accompanied de Venecia on his Aramco tour.

Petron-Aramco already operates a refinery in Bataan, and a $250 million modernization program has been approved to expand its operations and equip it with petrochemical production capability.

15 death convicts granted reprieve

PRESIDENT MACApagal-Arroyo has granted an indefinite reprieve to 15 convicts scheduled for execution in March, the government said yesterday.

No reason was given for the reprieve nor did the government say what crimes those benefiting from it had committed.

The President, a devout Catholic, imposed a moratorium on the death penalty after coming to power in 2001. But after a rash of kidnappings and murders in 2003, she lifted it.

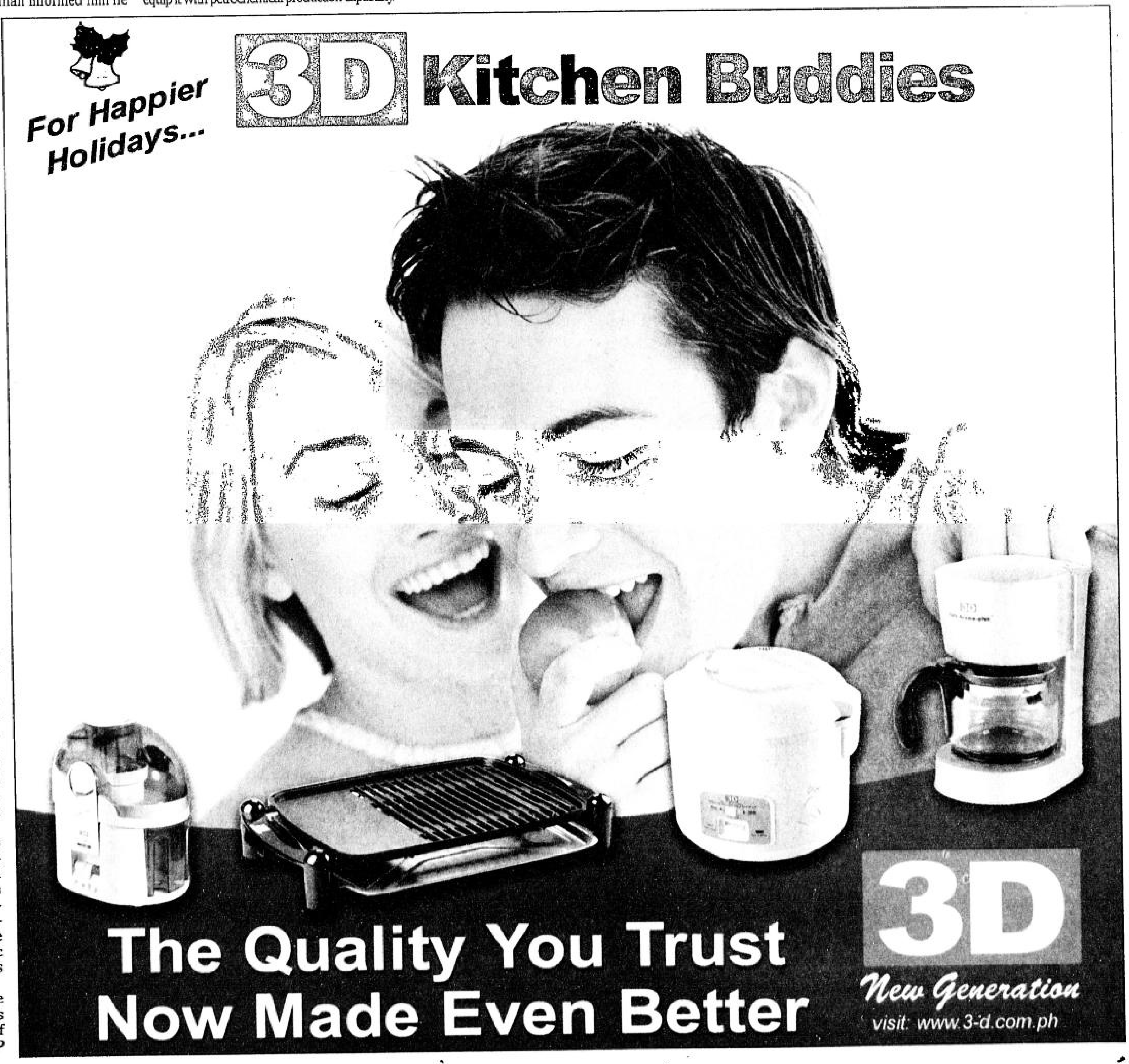
Reprieve grants

No executions, however, have been carried out and Ms Arroyo has always granted reprieves for those scheduled for execution.

The Philippines lifted a ban on executions in 1999 during the term of deposed President Joseph Estrada as part of the government's anti-crime drive.

Seven inmates were put to death between 1999 and 2000 before Estrada imposed a moratorium on further executions after pressure from the Catholic church and rights groups.

There are more than 1,000 inmates on death row, 29 of them women. *AFP*



Garci talks, says nothing

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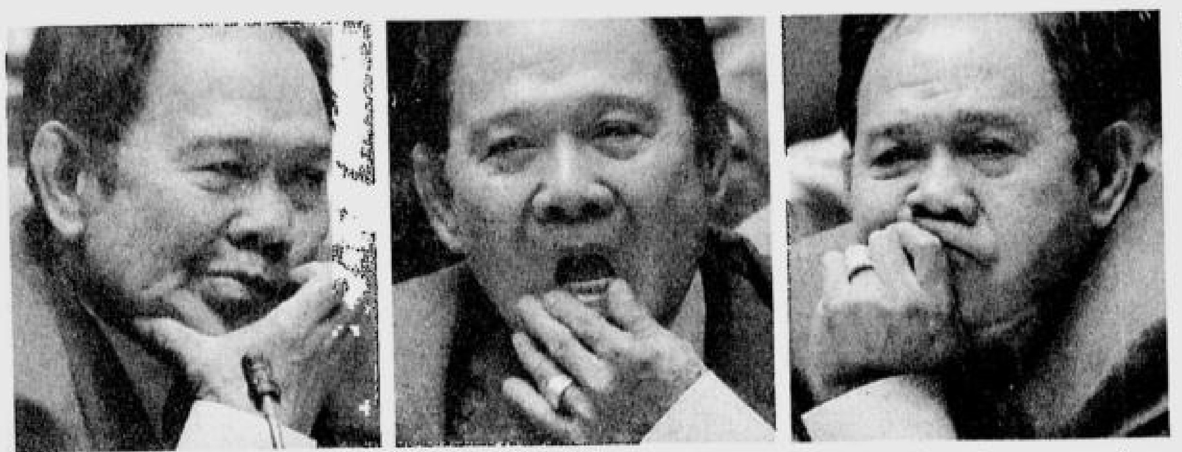


GARCILLANO IN CONGRESS. The gut issue, the tapped conversations with President Arroyo, remains unresolved.

EDWIN BACASMAS

his passport, if he could find it, to support his claim that he never left the country and prove Singapore wrong when its foreign ministry issued a diplomatic note saying that he had stopped in the city-state on July 14 on his way to London.

Liability for obstruction

"I did not leave the country. I was in and around the Philippines," said Garcillano, who was given seven days to turn in his passport.

Rep. Constantino Jaraula of Cagayan de Oro said that Garcillano's passport was important since it could lead to his imprisonment if it showed that he left the country.

"He could be jailed for obstruction of justice," said Jaraula.

Rep. Gilbert Remulla of Cavite confronted Garcillano about the Singapore statement, noting that Garcillano had two namesakes but that they had no passports.

"I am not competent to answer that," Garcillano said.

"Are you saying the Singaporeans are lying?" retorted Remulla.

"I'm not saying that," said Garcillano.

Remulla scored Garcillano for claiming that he could not remember when he had last seen his passport since it was issued in February 2002. Remulla said records in the Department of Foreign Affairs showed that Garcillano was given a passport on Feb. 11, 2004.

"I said I have the passport but I do not know when was the last time I saw my passport," Garcillano replied.

Memory fails?

"Is your memory failing you that badly?" Remulla said. "You remember the names of congressmen that you have corresponded with. You named 30 but you don't remember if you have a passport?"

Remulla also expressed surprise that Garcillano claimed that he was "not aware" that Congress was looking for him.

Garcillano said that he "never had the chance" to get a copy of the subpoena Congress issued against him.

"I never had a chance to get a copy of the subpoena your honor. I was not properly served. I was always around in the country," he claimed.

Garcillano did admit that he talked with Ms Arroyo at the height of the canvassing of votes last year but denied opposition claims this constituted electoral fraud.

"There was no mention about protecting votes," Garcillano said while being questioned by House Minority Leader Francis Escudero.

Asked by Escudero to reveal what transpired during the conversation, he said: "That is something that only the President can answer."

Relentless questions

This explicit admission provided opposition lawmakers with the ammunition to relentlessly pummel Garcillano with questions zeroing in on the wiretapped conversations between him and Ms Arroyo allegedly to manipulate the last presidential election. The wiretaps prompted an impeachment drive against Ms Arroyo, which her dominant allies in the House junked in September.

Garcillano remained steadfast throughout the questioning, which stretched into the late evening hours.

Garcillano also released an affidavit dismissing as "baseless" accusations he conspired with Ms Arroyo to fix the May 2004 election. He appended a list of 37 senators, congressmen and other politicians who he said talked with him during the balloting. He did not reveal what he discussed with them. He said it was up to these people to make public what they talked about, skating questions on whether the conversations constituted an impropriety. (Story on Page A6)

The inquiry started at 10 a.m. but due to the usual quibbling over procedural matters, Garcillano was able to read his opening statement only at a quarter before 11 a.m.

It took Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay to remind the five committees that House rules should not delay further the testimony of Garcillano.

"The opposition have been searching him for the last six months and now we're going to delay the hearing and put him on the box because of the stupid rules," said Pichay.

Rep. Emmylou Talino-Santos, chair of the lead committee, banged the gavel, signaling Garcillano to proceed with his testimony.

Talk with the President

Garcillano insisted to panel members that he could not "accept" as authentic the wiretapped conversations because they were spliced.

He said the May 24 conversation was about the President asking why her "advantage" over the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. decreased from one million to 892,00 in just two to three days.

"But that is already after the elections. Almost all of the results of the elections had already been submitted to the Senate," he said.

But Garcillano refused to confirm whether that conversation was the one referred to by Ms Arroyo in her "I am sorry speech" in July. In that speech, Ms Arroyo apologized to Filipinos for a "lapse in judgment" for talking with an election official. She said she was merely protecting her one million lead over the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"I cannot answer that. It should be the President who should be asked because that is something that only the President know. In fact, I'm not agreeable to the statement that she was sorry for calling anyone among the Commission on Elections because there is nothing wrong for anyone of you ... to call up any official ... as long as you will not demand doing something which is irregular," said Garcillano.

Garcillano admitted that he had known the President since she ran for the Senate in 1995.

He refused to answer Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin's question if any of his conversations with the 37 politicians he had named earlier in the hearing "contained any request for improper or illegal behavior or action in your part."

"I refuse to answer the question unless I can pinpoint the official who called me up and give me the permission to say so," said Garcillano, to which Locsin said: "I would take that to mean that some of them were improper."

Nothing wrong with phoning

Garcillano, however, said that "if there are things that are happening in the field and you feel that the commissioner in charge of that region needs to be consulted because you are already prejudiced, then you can do so, there is nothing wrong about asking for help in connection with correcting the actuations or behaviors of those in the field doing the electoral fraud."

Garcilano corroborated what he told the INQUIRER last Nov. 27 that he did not leave for Singapore en route to a third country.

"I did not leave the country, I was here in the country all this time. I have not gone to Singapore," he said, repeating what he wrote in a three-page sworn affidavit he submitted to the committee yesterday.

He also submitted a separate affidavit of his first cousin, lawyer Garcillano Jr., who "had always been accompanying me all over Mindanao."

GMA called Garci 15 times, says Nene

From page A1

of Mindanao alone—which were mentioned in the conversations between Ms Arroyo and Garcillano, or with other officials including Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. chair Efraim Genuino—the President benefited from 951,695 "fabricated" votes.

He said the votes reflected in the provincial certificates of canvass were manipulated after the calls were made.

Pimentel said the total effect of *dagdag-bawas* in Ms Arroyo's favor from Mindanao were: Lanao del Sur, 226,120 votes added; Basilan, 94,089; Sulu, 53,893; Tawi-Tawi, 27,236; Maguindanao, 109,151; and Sultan Kudarat, 151,971.

"As a result, GMA got what she wanted: a fabricated margin of 1,063,777 votes," he said.

'Manipulations'

Pimentel said that on the basis of the tampered COCs, Ms Arroyo won the election with 12,905,808 votes over Poe's 11,782,232.

For instance, he said, the results in the entire Lanao del Sur were manipulated after the May 28 call.

He also said that in the precinct-level election return (ER), Poe got 81 percent and Ms Arroyo 19 percent; in the tally of the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections, Poe got 56 percent and Ms Arroyo got 44 percent, but when the votes were transferred to the provincial statement of votes, Poe got 25 percent and Ms Arroyo got 75 percent.

After Ms Arroyo's call on May 27 asking what happened in Sulu, Pimentel said, the results in that province showed Poe had 86 percent and Ms Arroyo 14 percent in the ER, but when this was transferred to the provincial statement of votes, Poe got 21 percent and Ms Arroyo got 79 percent.

In Tawi-Tawi, he said, the ER showed Poe had 79 percent while Ms Arroyo has 21 percent, but when this was done in the provincial COC, Poe got 60 percent and Ms Arroyo got 40 percent.

In Sultan Kudarat, he said, Poe's 68 percent was reduced to 24 percent in the provincial COC while Ms Arroyo's 32 percent was increased to 70 percent.

'We must do something'

"I do not think it is proper for us to go like this—having a President who lied and cheated her way to the presidency, blatantly, remorselessly and without compunction. We must do something about it," Pimentel said.

He added: "I suggest we call upon the President to resign now and pave the way for new elections so that we can have a new leader we can rally behind as a people, and give him or her a chance to mobilize the nation for the attainment of national goals."

The Senate decided to continue tackling Pimentel's speech on Monday.

'Let things happen'

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President would only consider revealing the person she was talking with in the "Hello Garci" tapes after Garcillano wraps up his testimony and the public clamors for more revelations on the scandal.

"The President's attitude is to let things happen the way they are unfolding right now. The truth will come out in the ongoing hearing and she believes that she has nothing much to say that she hasn't said before," Ermita told reporters.

When asked if Ms Arroyo was willing to disclose the identity of the person, Ermita said: "I cannot tell you with definiteness whether that is an issue the President would have to answer right now."

He said Ms Arroyo was anxious to hear the rest of Garcillano's testimony before deciding whether it was still necessary to "fit in clarifications on issues that people think they have not been clarified about."

Ermita said another factor for the President's naming names was the public response to Garcillano's testimony: "What we want to know is whether the greater majority of the people will be satisfied with what Garcillano has to say. Let's put that in a survey.

"We prefer that we listen first to the clamor of many for more information, and if there is a way we can fill in the void, we will do that. It's too early to say our level of satisfaction because we still don't know what will happen."

Ultimately, Ermita said, the decision to name names was solely the President's call.

"That is what is good about her—she decides by herself," he said.

More doors opened

Senators said Garcillano's testimony raised more questions about allegations that he and Ms Arroyo had rigged the 2004 presidential election.

"Mr. Garcillano surfaced supposedly to close this chapter in our life. I think he has opened more doors rather than closed a chapter," Senate President Franklin Drilon said.

Drilon, who said he had monitored the House hearing, noted how Garcillano refused to answer many questions: "In fact, even pro-administration congressmen appeared exasperated with [his] refusal to answer questions. I have no doubt from the very start that this is a script, but nobody can predict how the script will end."

Far from over

Opposition Sen. Serge Osmeña said the "Hello Garci" episode was far from over.

"Oh, no way. It opens it all the more," Osmeña said, and said of Garcillano: "He is a selective truth teller and a wholesale liar."

Opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson said: "The gut issue here is the calls made by GMA to him."

Drilon said the mention of senators who had phoned Garcillano were intended to muddle the issue.

"The issue here is the conversation of the President, not the conversation of the senators. I think the script is to muddle the issue with the inclusion of six senators," he said. *With a report from Alcuin Papa*

Garci's list: 37 senators, congressmen, politicos

FORMER ELECTION COMMISSIONER VIRgilio Garcillano said yesterday he talked by telephone or in private meetings during last year's election with at least 37 senators, representatives and other politicians.

However, he declined to say whether the conversations were improper and left it to them to reveal what they had discussed with him.

He said there were actually more than 37 callers, but he could not immediately recall who the others were.

Named during a joint House hearing into the "Hello Garci" controversy and their respective reactions, where available, were:

Former Sen. Loren Legarda—denied talking with Garcillano, said she preferred to see results of election protest against Vice President Noli de Castro. "Let the ballot boxes be opened and let the truth be told."

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile—said he called Garcillano after the balloting "on behalf of somebody else" and added that "If I thought it was irregular I would not have called him."

Sen. Jamby Madrigal—issued denial, saying "I did not ask Mr. Garcillano for anything."

Sen. Alfredo Lim—"I don't even know his phone number."

Sen. Richard Gordon—dismissed Garcillano claim as "pure hallucination."

Sen. Mar Roxas—"I did not call him, ever!"

Sen. Panfilo Lacson—never called "any time before, during and after the 2004 election," threatened to sue Garcillano.

Rep. Clavel Martinez—"He came to me because I am a member of the Commission on Appointments and he was lobbying for confirmation as commissioner."

Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano of Taguig-Pateros—"A friend asked me to have lunch. When we got there, Garcillano was there."

Minority Leader Francis Escudero of Sorsogon—issued a denial. "The statement is nothing short of a political blackmail."

Rep. Benasing Macarambon of Lanao del Sur—said he called Garcillano because Chair Benjamin Abalos was ill and his watchers were being evicted in Marawi.

Rep. Arnulfo Fuentebella of Camarines Sur—"I just like to make it on record, this is the first time I have met Mr. Garcillano."

Rep. Anthony Miranda of Isabela—Talked with Garcillano in his office on a persistent rumor that his opponent was spreading that his the Commission was nullifying his proclamation as winner.

Rep. Roilo Golez of Parañaque—"I categorically deny talking to Garci personally or by phone. Garci, instead of being penitent, appears very aggressive and hostile. Who is emboldening him?"

Rep. Eduardo Zialcita of Parañaque—"I met him a couple of times in social gatherings. But that's way after the elections. We never talked about election-related matters."

Rep. Lorna Silverio of Bulacan—"I'm not denying that I called then Commissioner Garcillano. That was April this year only because I was asking for the status of a barangay election protest in one of my towns, which case has been pending in his division."

Rep. Peter Paul Falcon of Surigao del Sur—unavailable for comment (as well as for those following in the list).

Rep. Rafael Nantes of Quezon
Rep. Danilo Suarez of Quezon
Rep. Narciso Bravo of Masbate
Rep. Ma. Amelita Villarosa of Occidental Mindoro
Rep. Suharto Mangudadatu of Sultan Kudarat
Rep. Ricky Sandoval of Malabon-Navotas
Rep. Bobbit Carlos of Valenzuela
Rep. Munir Arbison of Sulu
Rep. Ernie Clarete of Misamis Occidental
Rep. Danilo Lagbas of Misamis Oriental
Rep. Jurdin Jesus Romualdo of Camiguin
Opposition lawyer Liwayway Vinzons-Chato
Former Rep. Lynette Punzalan of Quezon
Former Rep. Nur Jaafar of Tawi-Tawi
Former Rep. Georgidi Agabao of Isabela
Former Rep. Romeo Candazo of Marikina
Former Rep. Jesnar Falcon of Caraga
Mayor Vicente Eusebio of Pasig
Gov. Leandro Verceles of Catanduanes
Former Gov. Sakur Tan of Sulu
Former Rep. Jakiri of Sulu

Most of GMA critics snub prayer breakfast for unity

From page A1

an Arroyo critic who heads the Jesus Is Lord Movement.

The Philippine National Prayer Breakfast Foundation had expected around 1,000 national leaders from the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, including the police and the military, to turn up at the prayer breakfast at the Manila Hotel.

The foundation is headed by former Interior Secretary Jose Lina.

Reminder on integrity

Ms Arroyo, accused of rigging the 2004 elections, and other leaders got a strong reminder on integrity, credibility and accountability from Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the new head of the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), who delivered the keynote speech.

"An accountable leader doesn't sweep the truth under the carpet," Lagdameo said to a thunderous applause at the 24th National Prayer Breakfast.

"They do not run away from the truth or try to camouflage it. They take responsibility. They make restitution or try to repair the damage they have done, when they have done wrong."

Servant leaders

Lagdameo was outlining what he said were expected of "servant leaders" who are needed to once and for all transform the nation.

Ms Arroyo and Pimentel hardly glanced at each other at the VIP table. They shook hands only at the end of the program.

While making clear that his message was directed to all leaders in society, Lagdameo pointed out that more was expected of those in government.

"The higher the position in governance, whether in Church or government, or in professional occupation, the higher the level of integrity is expected," he said in his first public appearance as new president of the country's 119 Catholic bishops.

Closure demanded

Lagdameo earlier made waves when he reportedly demanded closure to the "Hello Garci" scandal centered on Ms Arroyo's alleged manipulation of last year's election. Ms Arroyo has denied any wrongdoing.

He had also criticized Ms Arroyo's failed impeachment as the supposed result of "mere technicalities" pushed by her avid supporters in the House of Representatives.

Much of the criticism of the President was also directed at measures Malacañang subsequently imposed allegedly to further suppress the truth about the scandal.

Among them were the "calibrated preemptive response" policy used to disperse anti-Arroyo rallies and Executive Order No. 464, which kept government officials from appearing in congressional hearings without Ms Arroyo's consent.

Booming

In a speech delivered in a booming fashion, Lagdameo said: "Credibility is the acid test of integrity."

"People believe in the leader who does what he says he will do and by example leads the people in doing what he says 'we' will do," he said.

The archbishop said that "the more credible a leader is, the more confidence people place in him."

Lagdameo said transforming the nation would require individual conversion and a "revolution of the heart."

"When I point a finger to another, my thumb is pointing to God as my witness, and my three fingers are pointing to myself," he said. "Before national transformation can happen, personal repentance and reform are a necessity and these are ultimately an individual and personal obligation."

The prelate urged government leaders to put premium on providing food, education, housing, health and livelihood.

"We call this option for the poor through option for justice," he said. "(But) if we attempt to transform our country without change of lifestyle, through values shift from self-interest to national interest, the transformation will only be at best an artistic movement or a cosmetic change that vanishes in the evening."

US Embassy reopens for business today

By Volt Contreras

THE US EMBASSY IN MANILA REOPENS "for business" today after a two-day suspension of its consular and other services as a result of a "threat" received on the night of Dec. 5.

The announcement was made late afternoon yesterday by US Press Attaché Matthew Lussenhop, who said the embassy's visa, passport, social security, and veterans affairs services would thus resume.

But while the alarm has apparently subsided at Washington's facility along Roxas Boulevard, the Singapore Embassy in Makati City yesterday confirmed getting a threat also on the same night.

According to reports, another menacing message was picked up by the Swiss Embassy in Makati. But this could not be confirmed with that embassy at press time.

Singaporean First Secretary Adrian Chan said that per the message reaching his post, "we have been named as one of the targets"—a suggestion that more embassies might have also received threatening calls that night.

But Chan explained that his embassy had been informed of the threat by a "third party," or a person not connected with the post whom the source of the threat had contacted.

Chan said his embassy reported the alleged threat to the police and conducted business as usual the next day.

The night of Dec. 5 saw the closing ceremonies of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila, a crowd-drawing international festivity that authorities had conceded early on to be a potential terrorist target.

The huge gathering was walking distance from the US Embassy compound.

Malacanang issued an assurance that the government was on top of the situation.

"Deep intelligence-gathering and preemptive measures are already in place to foreclose any serious breaches in our peace and order situation," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said security teams were now working closely with the US Embassy and other foreign embassies "to assess current threats and to neutralize them."

Bunye called on the people to be alert, and reminded them that "terrorism cannot gain a foothold in a vigilant community."

The Southern Police District said its Task Force Diplomatic Security had been on heightened alert since Tuesday night.

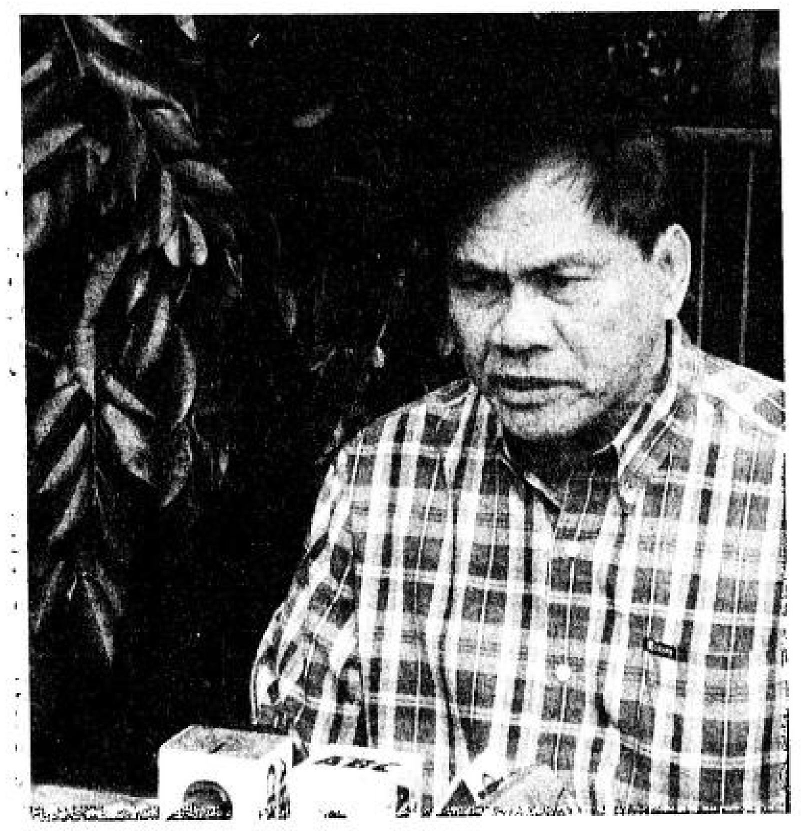
SPD Director Wilfredo Garcia said that with southern Metro Manila being home to about 66 embassies, its police could not take chances and had to keep tight watch.

The task force is composed of about 400 SPD personnel providing 24-hour close-in and convoy security to ambassadors and diplomats and guarding the gates of embassies.

"They are also keeping an eye on the ambassadors' and diplomats' residences," Garcia told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Most of the ambassadors reside in posh subdivisions and villages in Makati, he said.

With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Jocelyn R. Uy



"I THOUGHT he was coming clean but here he's again peddling lies," Ong says of Garcillano to explain why he's surfacing at this time.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ong comes out, enraged at Garci 'lies'

From page A1

his committee on national defense and security resumed its hearing on the wiretapping scandal.

Like knight in shining armor

Hours before Virgilio Garcillano testified at a House hearing yesterday, Ong conducted a press conference outside the capital and for 15 minutes riled at the "head of state" treatment that the former election commissioner was getting from all and sundry.

"He was treated like a knight in shining armor, messenger of good news, bearer of the truth," said the former NBI official.

Ong said he decided to break his silence after hearing Garcillano on his return to the public eye late last month. "My God, I thought he was coming clean, he was coming out to tell the truth, but here he is again, peddling lies," he said.

Garci muddling issue

"Nagngitngit po ako. Akala ko po lalabas siya para magsabi ng totoo (I got angry. I thought he was coming out to tell the truth)," he said. "But he is coming out to muddle the issues, peddle more lies," Ong added.

He said he had asked his team of lawyers, including Homobono Adaza and Liwayway Vinzons-Chato, to make representations with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, the Senate and the House so that the charges against him could be lifted and he could finally testify before the congressional inquiries and present his tapes.

Ong first emerged on June 10 in the midst of the wiretapping controversy to announce he had the "mother of all tapes."

Saying the recordings were evidence of electoral fraud against President Macapagal-Arroyo, Ong attempted to summon a People Power demonstration to pressure her to resign. His calls failed to generate much interest.

Ong had vanished after his abortive call for mass demonstrations from the San Carlos Seminary on Edsa, claiming his life was in danger.

Tapes came from Isafp agent

The justice department later slapped Ong with charges of sedition, illegal detention and kidnapping in connection with accusations by the wife of T/Sgt. Vidal Doble, an operative of Isafp, the military intelligence service.

Ong had allegedly forcibly detained Doble at the seminary with him.

Looking relaxed in a long-sleeved checkered green shirt, blue jeans and black shoes, Ong claimed that only one of the four tapes had been made public so far.

Ong had said that the tapes had been handed to him by disgruntled military elements. Yesterday, he said Doble had given him the tapes between late February and early March.

Doble, who is in military custody, has denied this.

In June, Ong said he had entrusted the tapes to friends, for fear that they would fall into the wrong hands. But he said all four tapes were now in his possession.

He refused to provide details on the contents of the tapes. "It is not in my power," he said. He added that he would rather play the tapes before the Senate or House, so the people could judge for themselves.

Ong had planned to come out yesterday and today. But on Monday, he said he saw Gonzalez on television threatening to arrest him if he showed up in Congress.

"Where is fair play here? When Garcillano came out, he demanded that the P1 million (bounty) be withdrawn. It was withdrawn," he lamented, "along with his arrest warrant."

Plea for safe conduct

While Ong said he was not asking for a similar treatment, he appealed to Gonzalez to help cause the withdrawal of the cases against him. He also made similar appeals to House Speaker Jose de Venecia and Senate President Franklin Drilon for a safe conduct pass, so he could appear in both houses of Congress.

For the first time, Ong admitted he had given Doble P1 million prior to his exposé, but he said it was not a bribe as Doble had earlier alleged.

Doble had requested P2 million for his family in case something happened to him, Ong said. But Ong could only come up with P1 million, adding that he had had to solicit the money from family and friends, whom he refused to name.

In his affidavit, Doble had claimed former actress Laarni Enriquez, a mistress of deposed President Joseph Estrada, was the source of P2 million in bribe money for him to authenticate the "Hello Garci" tapes. Enriquez has denied the charge.

But Ong had no ill feelings toward Doble for executing the affidavit, which also accused him of kidnapping and forcing Doble to admit to being the source of the tapes.

Judgment Day coming

"Do you think those were his words? He just became a victim. He had no choice but to state what he did in the affidavit ... to protect his family," he said.

Ong described Doble as the "epitome of the real soldier. *"Yung lakas ng loob niya, nailantad sa buong mundo* (His strength of character was shown to the world)," he said.

Ong had a parting message for Garcillano: "Compañero, we are in the twilight of our career. Judgment Day is just around the corner ... We should be preparing ourselves for Judgment Day. Let's not further peddle lies ... let us repent. Ask forgiveness." *With a report from TJ Burgonio*

Gov't downplays Negroponte arrival . . .

From page A1

the visit of the US director for national intelligence, and that President Macapagal-Arroyo hosted dinner for him on Tuesday night.

Negroponte also met yesterday morning with National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, who said the visitor had inquired about the terror threat here.

Negroponte, who served as US ambassador to the Philippines in 1993-96, and his party arrived from Alice Springs, Australia, at 3:45 p.m. Tuesday on board a C-17A aircraft of the US Air Force.

Left yesterday for S. Korea

Sources at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport said Negroponte's group took off for South Korea in the same plane at 1:13 p.m. yesterday.

"The purpose of his visit was really to look at how things are with an allied country such as the Philippines, as far as our counterterrorism program is concerned," Ermita told reporters at his weekly news briefing.

"The Philippines is a close ally, and the [US knows] that we have an active terrorist problem so [Negroponte] would like to take a look at how things are [here]. The important thing in fighting terrorism is through enhanced intelligence," he also said.

Ermita surmised that Negroponte had wanted to check on "the effectiveness of the intelligence exchanges" between the Philippines and the United States, especially on terrorism.

He said Negroponte was informed of the strides achieved by the Philippines in the war against terrorism at home, including the killing of 28 Abu Sayyaf members and the arrest of 165 suspected terrorists, including 132 from the extremist group.

Ermita said Negroponte was also told of the conviction of those behind the Dos Palmas kidnappings and the Valentine's Day bombing in Makati City, as well as the recent arrest of leaders and members of a suspected terror group, the Rajah Solaiman Movement.

Tight security

Amid tight security, Negroponte arrived at 9 a.m. yesterday at the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (Nica) on V. Luna St. in Quezon City, escorted by a convoy of blue sports utility vehicles with diplomatic plates and patrol cars of the Manila and Quezon City police's Special Action Force.

Security men in plainclothes were posted at the drugstore across the street and on the side streets surrounding the building until Negroponte and his party, mostly American personnel, left the office compound at 10:30 a.m.

In a phone interview minutes after Negroponte left, Gonzales said the US official was "just on a mission to really find out everything about the threat of terrorism here, the terrorist groups based in Mindanao, and their allies from Indonesia."

He said Negroponte was given a briefing on the terrorist threat by the local intelligence community. But the "plausible threat information" received by the US Embassy in Manila on Monday night was not on the agenda.

"We did not even discuss it," Gonzales said of the threat which prompted the embassy to suspend all its public services Tuesday and yesterday.

Negroponte was given a list of terrorist groups in the Philippines and their allies abroad, Gonzales added.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a ranking intelligence officer told the INQUIRER that Negroponte did not discuss politics with "higher officials" of the intelligence community.

"He came here to discuss [bilateral] cooperation in the fight against terrorism," said the officer.

Not a surprise

The officer said Negroponte knew the Philippine situation "pretty well" and "expressed satisfaction" at RP-US cooperation in fighting terrorism.

The officer also said that he saw nothing unusual in Negroponte's low-key arrival, and that the latter had visited and was visiting other nations in the region.

"Why does his visit have to be announced, anyway? He is, after all, an intelligence official. That's his style," the officer said.

Even the Department of Foreign Affairs maintained that contrary to perception, Negroponte's visit was not a surprise.

DFA spokesperson Bert Asuque said the foreign office received a note verbale around two weeks ago from the US Embassy concerning Negroponte's arrival.

Asuque said the Philippines was part of Negroponte's tour of US allies in the Asia-Pacific region.

In Malacañang, Ermita said it was "coincidental" that Negroponte arrived at a time when the US Embassy was on heightened alert because of an undisclosed threat.

He said it was not only the US Embassy that had received threats but other foreign embassies in Manila as well. *(See sidebar on this page.)*

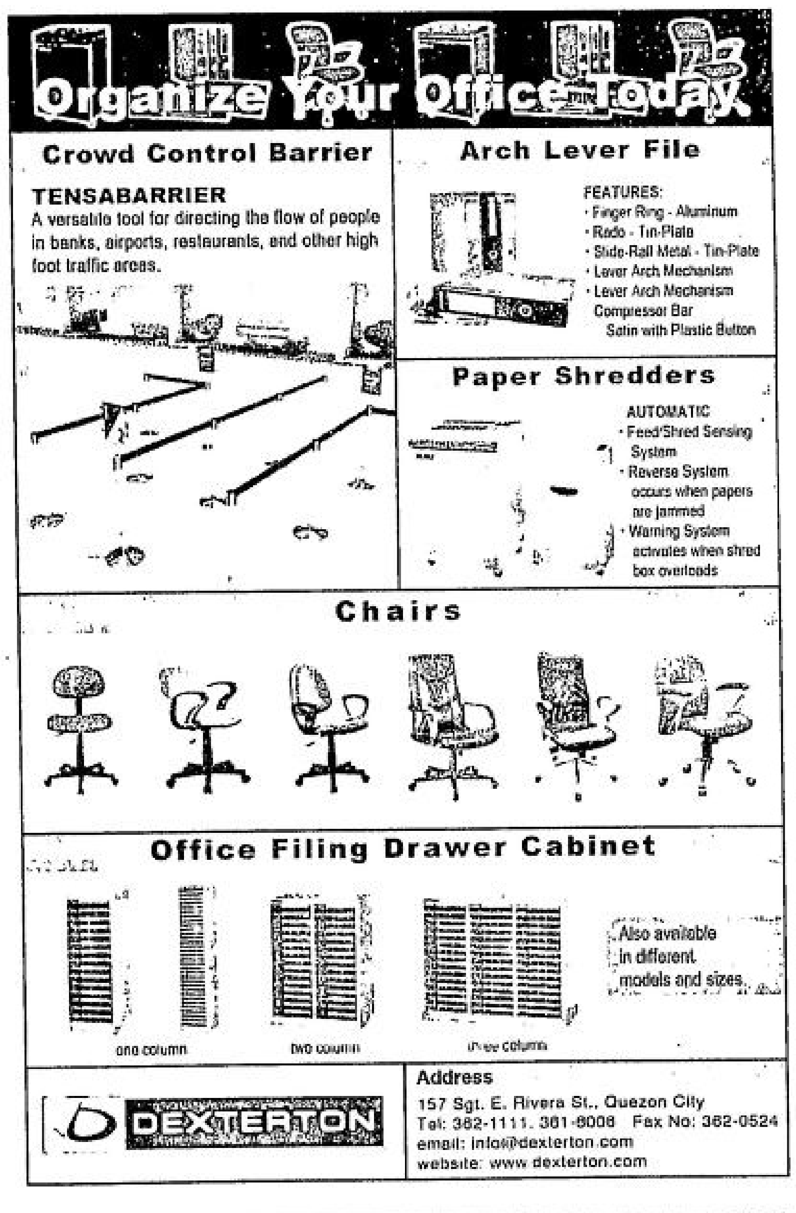
Actually, Ermita said, there was "a continuing effort at intelligence exchanges" between the Philippines and the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

For some reason, these countries are "getting threats either by text messaging or through information from intelligence assets," he said.

That's how it is

Asked why there was no media advisory on Negroponte's arrival, US Press Attaché Matthew Lussenhop replied: "That's just how we preferred to handle this particular visit."

Lussenhop also declined to comment on reports that the SEA Games' closing ceremony might have been targeted for a terrorist attack, saying the embassy was "in no position to confirm that" and that the matter was "for the Philippine government to address." *With reports from Luige A. del Puerto, Volt Contreras and Nikko Dizon*



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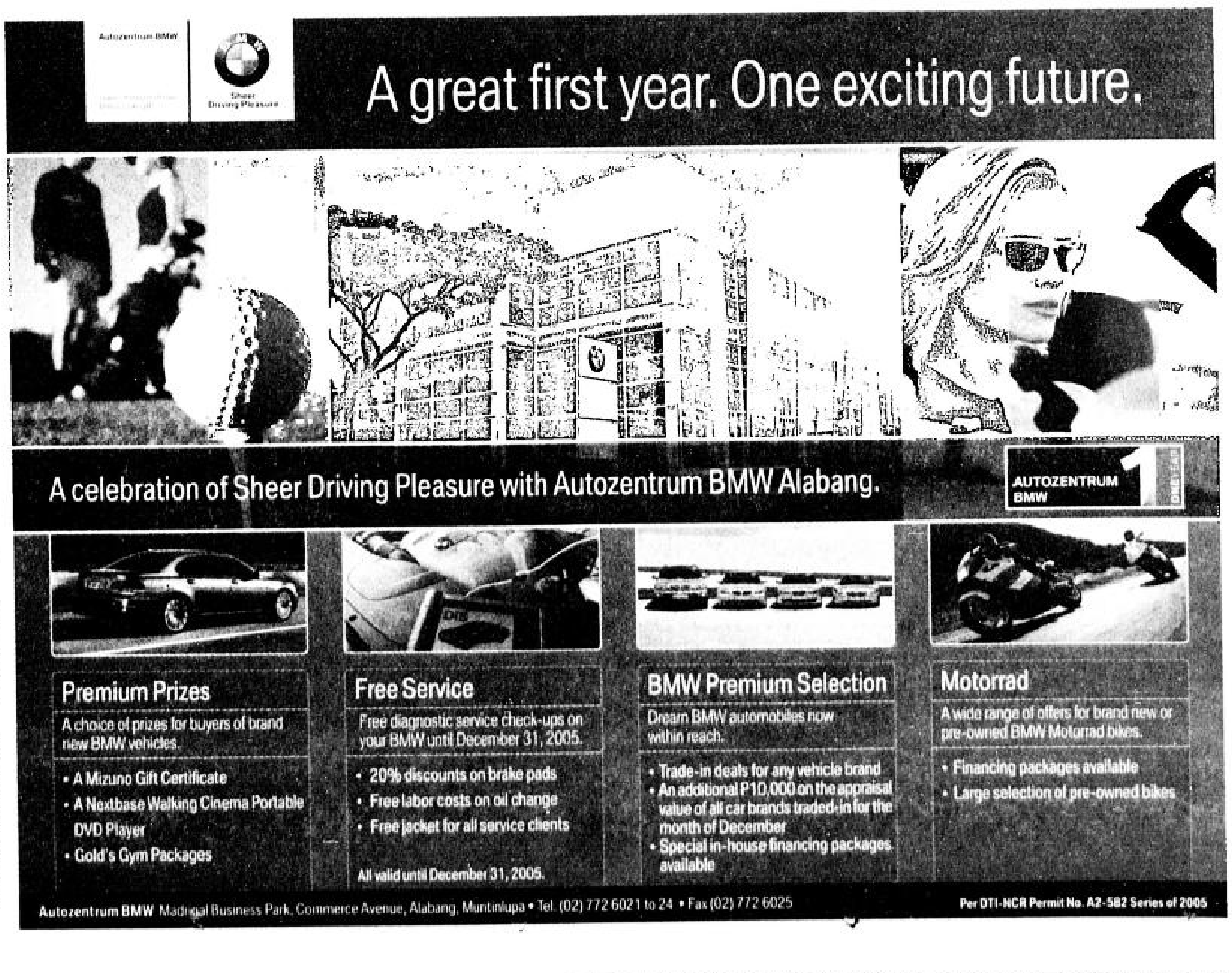

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-582 Series of 2005

Mike A's building strafed; Puno car bombed

From page A1

parked in front of Ernest Printing.

Puno, a key ally and party mate of Ms Arroyo, was a known political operative of Ms Arroyo during the 2004 presidential election.

Rounce Printing Corp. and Ernest Printing were said to be involved in the overprinting of election materials for last year's election.

A group of soldiers calling itself the "Enlightened Warriors" took responsibility for the strafing of the Lourdes Tuason-Arroyo (LTA) Building in Makati.

THE BULLET-RIDDLED facade of the LTA building in Makati City, the law office of Mike Arroyo, is inspected by crime scene investigators. ERIK ARAZAS

Frustrated soldiers

"This attack symbolizes the widespread frustration and anger among AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) soldiery against the illegitimate and corrupt administration of Gloria Arroyo," the group said in a statement e-mailed to the INQUIRER.

Palace did it

But Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the strafing of the LTA Building and the explosion near the house of Puno were the handiwork of Malacañang.

"(This) could be a series of Malacañang staged-managed activities to project a breakdown of peace and order to justify the administration's long delayed plan to declare a state of emergency or even impose martial rule," Lacson said.

The AFP downplayed the existence of the "Warriors."

"I checked with the intelligence and counter intelligence of the AFP and they revealed that this is the first time they heard (about) this "Enlightened Warriors," a military spokesperson said when asked about the statement issued by the group.

In another statement e-mailed to the INQUIRER, a certain Miguel Alonzo said the attacks were warning blows.

"Beware the liars, the cheaters and the thieves for we are watching their every move," the statement said.

"It was not only Garcillano who cheated for GMA in the last elections. Slowly but surely, the vast machinery for fraud and corruption was exposed. Without a doubt, Mike Arroyo and his LTA gang, Ronaldo Puno, Roque Bello, Ernest Printing Press in Caloocan and Rounce Printing Press in Parañaque are among those who played key roles in perpetrating this crime against the nation," the statement said.

A report by Newsbreak magazine described Bello as someone involved in the "Antidote Group," a covert bloc in Ms Arroyo's campaign in 2004. The magazine said the group was tasked with curing election results in favor of Ms Arroyo.

Police officials, however, were cautious in assigning motive or in pinpointing possible perpetrators in the attacks.

The officials said the attacks were not meant to harm people but to create an atmosphere of chaos.

"We're investigating and we're looking into all possible angles," Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police (PNP), said.

Bataoil said the police were not discounting the possibility that "antigovernment forces" were behind the attacks.

The Firm

At around 4:40 a.m., men on a dark-painted car drove by the LTA Building on Perea Street and strafed it's first two floors, Southern Police District Director Wilfredo Garcia said.

The two lower floors of the nine-story building housed the Carpio, Villaraza and Cruz law firm, the Arroyos' personal counsel and one of the country's most influential law firms.

Macario Romilla, the security guard on duty at the time, said he was inside the building when he heard several gunshots. The vehicle bearing the gunmen then sped away toward Paseo de Roxas.

Police initially counted 21 bullet holes in the firm's front glass panels. Investigators retrieved spent shells of an M-14 rifle.

Investigators said some of the bullets penetrated as many as five layers, hitting computer CPUs (central processing unit), tables, dividers, walls and television sets inside the law office.

First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, dropped by the building at around 10:40 a.m., and the damage saw for themselves.

Usual security absent

The building is manned not only by private security guards but also by at least two officers from the PNP Special Action Force, and three men from the Presidential Security Group (PSG).

The Makati Police Department's Theft and Robbery Unit found that LTA's security detail at the time was less than the usual. "The SAF [officers] were absent, and there was only one duty PSG when usually there's three," said Insp. Marlon Almoguerra.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the PSG would handle the investigation of the strafing. The PSG took the spent bullets at the site.

Sow fear

Some seven hours after the strafing, a bomb placed under a van went off in Quezon City. No one was hurt in the blast.

The improvised explosive device was planted under Puno's Ssanyong van parked in front of the house of his son Noel at No. 18 Greenmeadows Drive in Barangay Ugong Norte, according to police.

Puno's driver Eddie Florendo told police he parked the van at about 9 a.m., and went inside the house.

Puno was visiting his son at the time of the incident, said Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan.

At 11:00 a.m., a blast was heard, causing minor damage to the van, with plate numbers WBX 383, he said.

Psy-war

The type of explosive used is still under investigation, but scene-of-the-crime operatives recovered a blasting cap and metallic fragments.

Puno, who represents the 1st District of Antipolo City, told the police official that he was not too concerned about the incident. "It could just be psy-war (psychological warfare)," Radovan quoted Puno as saying.

The blast was the second in a series of car explosions that rocked Parañaque, Quezon City and Caloocan City yesterday.

Panic

Panic gripped a neighborhood in Parañaque when a pillbox planted under a parked car exploded. A caller phoned the police at around 9 a.m., informing them that a car bomb went off at No. 7259 A. Bonifacio St. in Barangay San Dionisio.

"But it was not a car bomb," city police Chief Supt. Ronald Estilles told the INQUIRER.

The explosive device was planted under the silver-gray Honda CRV with plate number XJC 659 owned by Manuel de la Cerna, owner of Rounce Printing Corp., said Estilles.

De la Cerna's car was parked just in front of his printing press office. SPO2 Deo Cariño noted that the improvised explosive device, installed near the car's gas tank, was set off with a wick.

But the explosion was weak, causing slight damage to the SUV's step board and rear bumper.

Labor dispute

De la Cerna told the police that the explosion might have been perpetrated by those whom he laid off two to three months ago. One of the laid-off employees has filed a case against De la Cerna that is pending at the Supreme Court, according to Estilles.

A worker told police that he saw a man on board a motorcycle get near De la Cerna's car.

"The witness said the suspect's face was covered by a handkerchief," Estilles said. Nobody was hurt in the explosion.

In Caloocan, an explosive planted on the rear wheel of an SUV in front of the office of Ernest Printing on M.H. Del Pilar Street could have been detonated through a cell phone, a police officer said.

"Recovered from the scene of the crime were cell phone parts," PO2 Raymond Calica said.

Ernest Printing was earlier identified by the opposition as the company that was allegedly assigned by the Commission on Elections to overprint 30,000 election returns.

Calica said the explosion took place between 10 and 10:30 in the morning, a few minutes after Jonathan Yopontoy Lim entered the printing press office. Lim, said to be a son of one of the owners of Ernest Printing, used the Toyota Prado with plate number XDN 723.

No one was hurt in the explosion.

Seat of power

In its statement, the group that owned up to the strafing of the LTA Building said "the eighth floor is where Arroyo holds office, while the two lower floors are occupied by "The Firm," the law office of F. Arthur "Pancho" Villaraza, the Arroyos' personal lawyer.

'We've just begun'

The Enlightened Warriors called the LTA Building the "corporate and corruption headquarters of the Arroyos."

"The LTA Building in Makati is the real seat of power in the Philippines right now. It is here where the biggest unscrupulous covert deals are made among those in power against the interests of the great majority of people. It is here where money flows—the people's money transacted as private funds," the group said. *With reports from Luige A. del Puerto, Dona Pazzibugan, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Gil Cabacungan Jr. in Manila and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Davide: Judiciary's loss will be environment's gain

From page A1

ment, Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. yesterday said he planned to engage in farming in his village in Cebu to help improve the environment.

"This time, I will not be planting the seeds of reform in the judiciary, but I will be planting the seeds of fruit trees and forest trees," Davide said.

"I will be a participant in the great task of creation. That is, creating things that will improve our environment so that we can have a clearer environment."

He expressed hope that the environment in the court could also become "more clearer after me."

Since he assumed the post of Chief Justice in 1998, Davide has made judicial reform his priority, leading the other members of the high court in embracing judicial activism.

He initiated the Supreme Court's "Action Program on Judicial Reform" which included efforts toward:

- Improvement in the standards of law schools.
- Improvement of the bar examinations.
- More rigid selection and timely appointment of competent magistrates, and their continuing intellectual and ethical education.
- Increase in their compensation and retirement benefits.
- Strict enforcement of the disciplinary process.
- Consistent imposition of sanctions for the violation of our Code of Judicial Conduct.

Public information

Other programs were the computerization of the judiciary, the promotion of alternative methods of dispute resolution, the construction of modern halls of justice, activities to improve access to justice, and the creation of the public information office (PIO).

Court observers describe the creation of the PIO as unprecedented, even in international high courts, considering that lawyers and justices are required to live as "hermits," unaffected and untouched by political, personal or other influences in their decision-making responsibilities.

DAVIDE: Planting seeds

"No democracy can last unless the basic freedom of information and, in fact, the media would be fully protected and considered inviolate," Davide said.

The information office prepared yesterday's "remembrance and thanksgiving program" for the Chief Justice.

Media criticisms

When he assumed his post, Davide said he realized that "the time has come for us to be able to completely relay ourselves, to be understood by media and so we organized the public information office directly under the Office of the Chief Justice."

Before he leaves, he said he would also move to make the positions at the public information office "permanent and regular" and not be co-terminus with the Chief Justice.

Davide thanked the media for criticisms that helped him implement his judicial reforms.

"And with your cooperation I know that all our efforts of reform ... will spread all over the country," he said. "Even the most serious criticism that you will have against us will be much welcomed."

Ordinary citizen

"As a matter of fact, I welcome criticism because when I am criticized, I know where I failed and the criticism will only become a challenge for me to do better," he said.

Davide told the journalists that he would still be meeting them soon, "but no longer as your Chief Justice, but as an ordinary citizen."

"But you can be rest assured that you will always be welcome even to my own barangay in Argao, Cebu, where I will do a lot of planting."

In search of heroes, nation hails SEAG athletes in parade

From page A1

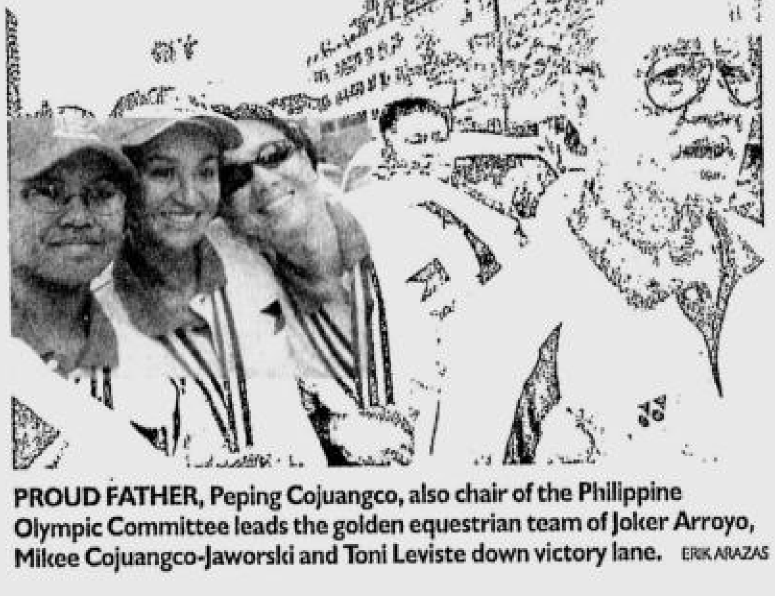
ing up an otherwise overcast, December afternoon.

About 200 members of Team Philippines basked in triumph with managers, office workers, street peddlers, construction laborers, and other transients, showing off and sharing the medals they won for the nation in the 11-nation biennial competition.

For an hour, Ayala Avenue was their playing field and the common folk were their cheerleaders.

Digital and mobile phone cameras popped out of pockets for snap shots, and the athletes gamely posed and mingled with the crowd that rivaled attendance in previous protest rallies in size.

As pastel-colored confetti showered down the athletes from buildings and a hovering helicopter, inspirational songs by local bands, Rivermaya's "Posible," Bamboo's "Noypi," and "Pinoy Ako," Team Philippines' official soundtrack during the Games, blared from speakers.



PROUD FATHER, Peping Cojuangco, also chair of the Philippine Olympic Committee leads the golden equestrian team of Joker Arroyo, Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski and Toni Leviste down victory lane. ERIK ARAZAS

As if to ge that Midas touch, onlookers and pedestrians held the medals the athletes wore around their necks.

Best thing

"It's the best thing that ever happened because it unites the country for one common cause. I don't think it (overall championship) would have been possible if the Filipinos did not come together to support the team," said US-trained swimmer Miguel Mendoza, the Games' most bemedaled Filipino athlete with three golds, a silver and a bronze.

Ushered in by the pulsating drumbeat from an *ati-atihan*, the pack of athletes, clustered based on their events, was led by Philippine SEAG Organizing Committee head and Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and the Game's mascot, Gilas, on a walk from Ayala Avenue corner Edsa to the road's end at Gil Puyat Avenue.

As hosts Chino Trinidad and Olympic swimmer Akiko Thompson called out the athletes' names, cheers erupted from a thick line of admirers who reduced Ayala's four-lane westbound side into an alleyway.

While hours earlier his family's building was strafed just a few blocks down, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo showed support and shook hands with the athletes at the intersection, the same site where thousands had gathered many times before to demand his wife President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation.

Throughout the parade though, there was not a tinge of politics, only the genuine pride of compatriots for victors who lifted the country's spirits amid moral turmoil.

"We have work, but we came down to see the athletes. We are very proud of them," said office worker Edith Malilay, among hundreds in business attires who turned into fans and took off a few hours from work to watch the event unfold.

If only for a fleeting moment, one side of the metropolis glowed with a parade of gold.

Muntinlupa cash reward

Muntinlupa City is set to reward its Southeast Asian Games athletes with cash for every medal won.

"Our athletes have shown the true power of Muntinlupeños, or 'Lakas-Munti' as we call them, and giving them financial incentive is one of our ways of showing them our support," Mayor Jaime Fresnedi told the INQUIRER.

City officials will gather on Monday to award gymnast brothers Roel, Ronnie and Al Ramirez, Danica Calapatan and Bonnie Sy; judokas Karen Solomon, Estie Liwanen, taekwondo-jin Criselda Roxas and arnis master Reginald Sanchez for hauling medals during the 23rd SEAG.

Gymnast Roel Ramirez is the city's lone double gold medalist. He also salvaged a silver and two bronzes. His two brothers and Sy each took a bronze.

Two bronze medals went to Calapatan, a gold to Solomon, a bronze to Liwanen and a silver to Sanchez.

Sports complex on the rise

Tez Navarro, public information office head, said that the local government through its sports development program, will award P7,000 for each gold won; P5,000 for every silver medal and P3,000 for each bronze medal.

The city's support to the athletes would not end in cash incentives. Three to four months from now, a P90-million first-class sports complex will rise in Barangay Tunasan, according to Fresnedi. *With a report from Jocelyn Uy*

Opinion Section: Marketplace of clashing ideas

From page A1

in effect added prestige to the country's leading daily and, in a way, attested to the outstanding quality of the its pool of columnists.

Preeminent role

Even in the earliest days of the INQUIRER, during the martial law days, its columnists readily enjoyed public trust. They were among the very few people who openly criticized the abuses of the Marcos dictatorship. It was a time when going against the government meant risking one's career, even life. The INQUIRER, due in large part to its columnists in the Marcos era, would emerge from that struggle looked up to as one of the major players that accelerated the downfall of the seemingly invincible dictatorship.

Also from that struggle, fearlessness became the hallmark of the Opinion Section. Pascua's list of nominees to the Truth Commission inevitably brings to mind the preeminent role the newspaper, from the time of its birth 20 years ago, has consistently played in many a crucial juncture of Philippine history.

Roads less taken

In the 1991 debate on the US bases, the INQUIRER chose to go against the tide of public opinion—surveys showed around 80 percent of the Filipino people favored retention—and ran an editorial strongly batting for their removal.

In 1999, the INQUIRER earned the ire of President Joseph Estrada, who called for an advertising boycott of the broadsheet, when it persisted to report the shenanigans in his young administration.

In the face of widespread public opposition to the proposed new expanded value-added tax law, the INQUIRER was the only newspaper which came out with an editorial endorsing the measure, although it preconditioned the support on the assumption that the government—Malacañang and Congress in particular—would do its share of austerity and transparency in the handling of public funds.

Contrary to editorials

This is not to say that the Opinion Section is a place where like ideas may rest comfortable and reaffirm each other. In fact, the INQUIRER sees to it that the section really serves as a real marketplace of ideas where people, from all walks of life and from all over the country, can converge daily to shop for logic and reason, or exchange views and ideas. Or make sense of what is happening in the country and the world and see the issues arising out of the unfolding events and their significance from a wider perspective.

As INQUIRER publisher Isagani Yambot put it in the Publisher's Note published on Dec. 5, "The INQUIRER stands for the expression of all views, whether these are consistent with those of the management and the editors or not."

This explains why letters and commentaries challenging INQUIRER editorials or the position of our columnists have seen print in the Opinion Section. In fact, it is not unusual to see INQUIRER columnists directly contradicting INQUIRER editorials which are the official stand of the newspaper on issues.

A case in point was Niñez Cacho-Olivares' columns where she critized the INQUIRER itself in support of Estrada's moves against the INQUIRER.

This could be the reason that people see the INQUIRER in different colors. In politics, for example, some find it too pro-GMA, but at the same time others see it too anti-administration.

On side of freedom

"The INQUIRER believes in freedom of the press and so gives its columnists the widest latitude in the choice of topics within their areas of competence," publisher Yambot, a practicing journalist for the last 52 years, said, emphasizing that unlike the editorials, the views expressed in the columns, commentaries and letters do not necessarily reflect those of the management and the editors of the INQUIRER.

"Our columnists' freedom to comment on current issues is circumscribed only by the laws of the land, including the laws on libel and the law on inciting to sedition, as well as by the Journalists' Code of Ethics and the Canons of Taste for Journalists," Yambot added.

"When there is no clear violation of the law or ethical standards, we decide on the side of freedom," Opinion Section editor Jorge Aruta elaborated.

"Let a hundred flowers blossom; let a hundred schools of thought contend." This famous line from Mao Zedong outlines the philosophical framework within which the Opinion Section operates.

Diversity

And by this light, Aruta would explain in defending the diversity found in the Opinion Section: "We don't choose our columnists because they happen to have the same ideas and beliefs as ours. It would be a journalistic disaster the moment we do that." Letters and other contributed articles sent to the section for publication are treated similarly. Except that they are subject to space limitations and other criteria. Reactions to INQUIRER news reports and other articles are given priority.

A letter-writer is allowed at least one or two (the most) contributions within a 30-day period—to allow others the opportunity to be heard too. We do not follow the first-come first-served policy because some letters are sent through fax, others through e-mail, and still others through the traditional postal service. Meaning to say, others are more disadvantaged in terms of modern facilities than others. Letters are edited only to conform with the available space and with the INQUIRER style but without changing their substance.

Generous to letter-writers

The INQUIRER is proud of the fact that it is the Philippine broadsheet that provides the most generous space for letters. On the Opinion Section's "Letters," INQUIRER readers can react to any INQUIRER articles (news stories, special reports, editorials, columns, commentaries, letters, ads, etc.), expound on their opinions on current or relevant issues, push for their advocacies, and engage other readers in debate.

Not only does the INQUIRER see to it that its Opinion Section serves as a marketplace and venue for the expression of all ideas. It also always makes the best effort to provide its readers with a forum where authoritative, incisive and interesting views come to a dynamic interplay.

Recognized authorities

INQUIRER columnists are recognized authorities or accomplished players in their respective fields of endeavors, and they do come from different disciplines and persuasions.

Aside from Justice Cruz, Father Bernas, General Farolan and professor David, the Opinion Section has in its stable of regular opinion writers Solita Monsod, former secretary of the National Economic and Development Authority and former dean of the UP School of Economics; former UP law dean Raul Pangalanan; Amando Doronila, a seasoned journalist recognized as one of the country's top political analysts; Neal Cruz, another well-known veteran journalist; and multi-awarded Conrado de Quiros, who is considered one of the best contemporary Filipino writers in English and very popular especially among students.

National Historical Institute's Ambeth Ocampo is known for retelling Philippine history in a manner that it comes alive and more interesting to young Filipinos.

Feminist movement's Rina Jimenez-David is a leading light on women's and children's issues and has been cited twice—in 1995 and 2004—as best columnist by the Global Media Awards.

A psychologist by profession, Ma. Ceres P. Doyo was a freelance writer for the "alternative press" during the Marcos regime. Her work as a journalist has given birth to her book titled "Journalist in Her Country: Articles, Essays and Photographs." She is also a recipient of several awards, among them, three Catholic Mass Media Awards and the Human Rights Award for Journalism.

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan, wife of retired Gen. Thelmo Cunanan, is a Hall of Fame awardee of the Rotary Club of Manila and was cited by the same organization as Journalist of the Year (1988-89). In February, she was recognized as an outstanding alumna by the College of the Holy Spirit.

Political activist Manuel Quezon III was the first prize winner of the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature (English essay) in 1997. Known for his incisive political observations, he is often sought for interviews by broadcast media.

Another veteran journalist, Cebu-based Juan L. Mercado, used to work with a United Nations agency. He has been named by the Rotary Club of Manila as Journalist of the Year (1968) and Opinion Writer of the Year (2004).

Mindanao-based Antonio Montalvan II got his doctorate in Anthropology as a scholar of the Ford Foundation. He also writes for Georgetown University's International Journal of Middle East Studies based in Washington, D.C. This year, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan named him its Most Outstanding Alumnus for 2005.

First teen columnist

And in keeping with the INQUIRER's trailblazing tradition, the Opinion Section enlisted this year 19-year-old Patricia Evangelista. The INQUIRER may have also scored a first here: the first mainstream newspaper to hire a teenager as a major columnist.

Young as she is, Evangelista, a senior B.A. Speech Communications student of the University of the Philippines, is no pushover. She's a leading member of the school's debating team and a certified world champion. She was adjudged the best of 59 contestants from 37 countries in the extemporaneous category of the English-Speaking Union International Public Speaking Competition held May 14, 2004 in London.

It is not a recent development for the Opinion Section or, for that matter, the newspaper to give the youth special space. (2bU!, a Lifestyle subsection, has been running since October 1997.)

In 1994, Opinion introduced "Young Blood," a special subsection exclusively dedicated to the young in the range of twentysomething and below, where they may share their thoughts and dreams, even their doubts and uncertainties. This has since become a regular feature of the Opinion Section, and one of the most widely read even by adults, according to surveys. Two books that put together the best of the Young Blood columns were best sellers.

Until now, only the INQUIRER has this kind of section. In tribute to and as a vote of confidence for the hope of the motherland, whom the INQUIRER believes the nation should listen to more intently, and often.

Through its 20 years of existence, the INQUIRER, as one executive of a Makati-based company noted, has most often found itself in the forefront of major national developments, oftentimes setting the agenda for national debate, even the country's policy directions, by influencing decision makers and shaping public opinion.

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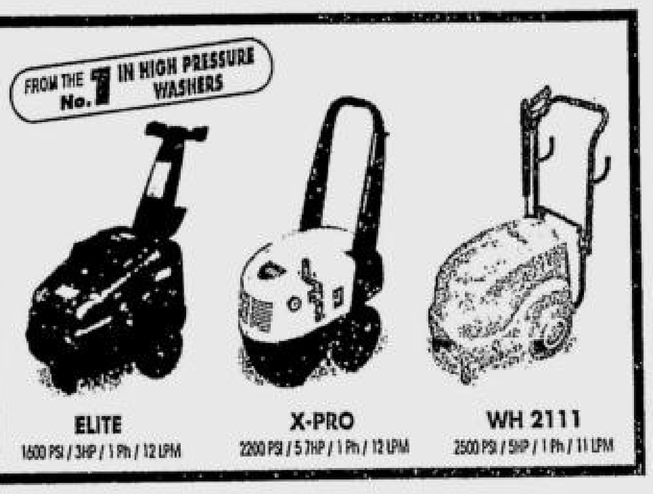
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78 journalists killed in Iran plane crash

TEHRAN—AROUND 116 PEOPLE, many of them journalists, were killed Tuesday when an aging Iranian military transport plane suffered engine failure and smashed into a densely populated area of Tehran, setting a high-rise block ablaze.

Official media said all 94 on board the C-130—bought from the United States before the Islamic revolution nearly three decades ago—died in the crash at the foot of a housing block and domestic gas supply depot.

"The plane disintegrated and all the bodies are burned. A young girl jumped from the window because of the flames. Most of the victims on the ground are women and children who were at home," Lieutenant Nasser Sedigh-Nia, who witnessed the crash, told AFP.

"The fuel tanks were full, which is why the explosion was so big," said the air force officer, one of many airport staff who live in the area. "Our C-130s are in a bad state because of the US sanctions: we can't get spare parts." Among the dead passengers were 78 journalists, 40 of them from state television, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. They were flying to the southeastern port city of Bandar Abbas and were then to travel to Charbahar further south to report on military exercises.

State radio said several army public relations officers were also on the plane.

In total 116 bodies have been recovered, interior ministry spokesperson Mojtaba Mir-Abdolahi said. State television put the death toll, including the 94 passengers, at "around 110." Dozens more people on the ground were reported injured, and anti-riot police were called in to beat away onlookers blamed for blocking access for emergency workers.

The four-engine plane encountered engine failure immediately after take-off from central Tehran's Mehrabad airport, state television said.

It tried to return for an emergency landing but went down close to the airport—which handles international, domestic and military flights—in the Yaftabad district in the working class south of the sprawling city, where visibility is very low due to a blanket of a thick brown-yellow smog.

"I saw the airplane. There was smoke coming out of one engine. It went into the ground very fast, very close to the building," said 30-year-old Mohammad Rasooli, a local resident.

"There was a huge explosion which engulfed the housing block." A local police commander, Nasser Shabani, said many of the dead on the ground were trapped in the nine-story building and suffocated from the smoke or were burned.

AFP

IRANIAN Air Force officials carry the body of a person killed in a plane crash in Tehran Dec. 6. REUTERS

Bin Laden still alive, says al-Qaida's No. 2

DUBAI—FUGITIVE AL-QAIDA number two Ayman al-Zawahiri claimed in a new videotape aired Wednesday that the network's leader Osama bin Laden was still alive and leading "jihad" against the West.

The turbaned Islamist also called on al-Qaida fighters to attack oil installations in Muslim countries, according to Al-Jazeera television which broadcast the video.

"Al-Qaida for holy war is still, thanks to God, a base for jihad. Its prince Osama bin Laden, may God protect him, still leads the jihad," Zawahiri said.

US officials believe that Bin Laden, the Western world's most wanted terror mastermind, and other key Qaida militants have been sheltering somewhere along the mountainous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

However his fate is unknown. Bin Laden has not been heard of since a Dec. 27, 2004 audiotape in which he anointed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Iraq's most wanted man, as al-Qaida's leader in the war-torn country. Bin Laden's last video appearance dates back to Dec. 16 last year when he also called on his fighters to strike Gulf oil supplies and warned Saudi leaders they risked a popular uprising.

In Wednesday's tape Zawahiri was quoted by Al-Jazeera as calling for attacks on oil installations in Muslim nations "because most of the revenues of this oil go to the enemies of Islam." Al-Jazeera said the tape appeared on a website but there was no indication of when it was recorded.

A bespectacled Zawahiri appeared in good health in the new videotape, wearing a traditional white robe and black turban which observers say was an apparent sign of allegiance to the ousted Taliban militia in Afghanistan.

"All the lies that (US President George W.) Bush tries to delude the Americans with, saying that he destroyed half, or three quarters of al-Qaida are but nonsense merely in his own head," he said.

"We want to tell all the Muslims and the mujahedeen (fighters) that al-Qaida, thank God, is expanding and increasing in strength. It has become with God's will a natural popular organization that is confronting the new Crusader-Zionist campaign to defend all violated Muslim territories," he said.

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Israel restricts movements in West Bank

JERUSALEM—ISRAEL LAUNCHED A MILITARY clampdown in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday in the opening stages of what it vowed would be a harsh response to a Palestinian suicide bombing that killed five Israelis.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has given the green light for hits on leaders of Islamic Jihad, the group behind Monday's attack in central Israel, amid a reelection campaign against rightist foes who accuse him of being soft on the Palestinians.

"We will do all we can to strike at the attackers," Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said after Israel's security cabinet approved retaliation plans, which threatened a new spiral of violence that could bury hopes stirred by Israel's Gaza pullout.

Israel's army said it tightened restrictions on Palestinian movement in the West Bank and carried out raids that led to 14 arrests for the bombing at a busy shopping mall in Netanya. The bomber's father and three brothers were detained.

Israel also suspended VIP entry permits for Palestinian officials and would buffer its forces in border areas near the West Bank, Shalom said.

Security sources said Israel wanted to deal a heavy blow to Islamic Jihad, which is sworn to the destruction of the Jewish state, and send a message to the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas that he must crack down on militants.

But they said the response would be tempered to avoid drawing in Hamas, a more powerful Islamist group that has largely restrained itself during the ceasefire engineered by Abbas.

"It will be a show of strength but not something that will get out of control," one Israeli security official said.

Shalom said Israel had no plans to re-enter Gaza, which it quit in September after 38 years of occupation. Ground operations would focus on the northern West Bank.

Islamic Jihad said it carried out the attack to avenge Israel's recent killing of senior members.

Gaza-based leaders of the group could not be reached on their mobile phones, suggest ing they had switched them off for fear the signal could be used to pinpoint them in an Israeli air strike.

Reuters

WHO sees more bird flu outbreaks in China

BEIJING—MORE BIRD FLU OUTBREAKS ARE likely in China over the next few weeks, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned Wednesday, a day after a fourth human infection was confirmed in the giant Asian nation.

"We expect more outbreaks to occur in the weeks ahead of us," the WHO's representative for China, Henk Bekedam, told a briefing.

Thirty H5N1 outbreaks have been confirmed across China this year, most of them over the past five or six weeks.

Bekedam's remarks came after China's Health Ministry announced late Tuesday a 10-year-old girl from Guangxi region in the nation's south had contracted the potentially lethal H5N1 virus and was receiving emergency treatment.

The girl, surnamed Tang, from Yanzhu village in Guangxi's northeast, was in a better condition Wednesday, two weeks after she initially fell ill, said Xu Guangbao, a spokesperson for the Guangxi health department.

"She has no more fever," Xu told AFP by telephone. "Her parents are hospitalized and under medical observation, but so far they're normal."

Tang and her family live in a mountainous rural area less than 50 km from Hunan province, home to one of three other human cases of avian influenza confirmed in China over the past month.

About 500 km to the southwest of the Tangs' home is Guangxi's border with Vietnam, the nation hardest hit by the bird flu virus with more than 40 human fatalities since late 2003.

"At the border with Vietnam they have been doing a lot of vaccination," said Bekedam. "There's a kind of cordon to make sure the infection doesn't come from Vietnam." Reflecting the unusual lethality of bird flu, two of China's four confirmed human cases ended with the patient dying.

China announced the H5N1 virus killed two women, one of them pregnant, in the eastern province of Anhui on Nov. 10 and 11.

The third confirmed case was a nine-year-old boy in central China's Hunan province, but he recovered and was discharged from hospital.

The government said the disease had also likely claimed the life of his 12-year-old sister, who died on Oct. 17. However inadequate testing meant the cause of death could not be confirmed.

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Iraq suicide blast

BAGHDAD—Two Iraqi policewomen killed 36 fellow officers and cadets in a double suicide bombing in Baghdad Tuesday, as insurgents claimed the kidnapping of an American amid further violence just nine days before key elections. The bombing at the Baghdad police academy was the worst attack on security forces in weeks and exacerbated concerns about stability ahead of elections for a permanent parliament. Police said at least 36 officers and students were killed, with 72 other people wounded. Among those hurt was a US contractor. An Internet statement in the name of Jordanian-born militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaida in Iraq claimed responsibility for the academy attack. The group alleged that the academy gave "diplomas to dogs who spill the blood of and maul the bodies of Sunnis," suggesting a sectarian motive behind the attack. "The explosion that took place this morning was carried out by two female police officers from the same academy," Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Baker Solagh, who is on a visit to the United Arab Emirates, was quoted by the official WAM news agency as saying.

AFP

Tehran pollution

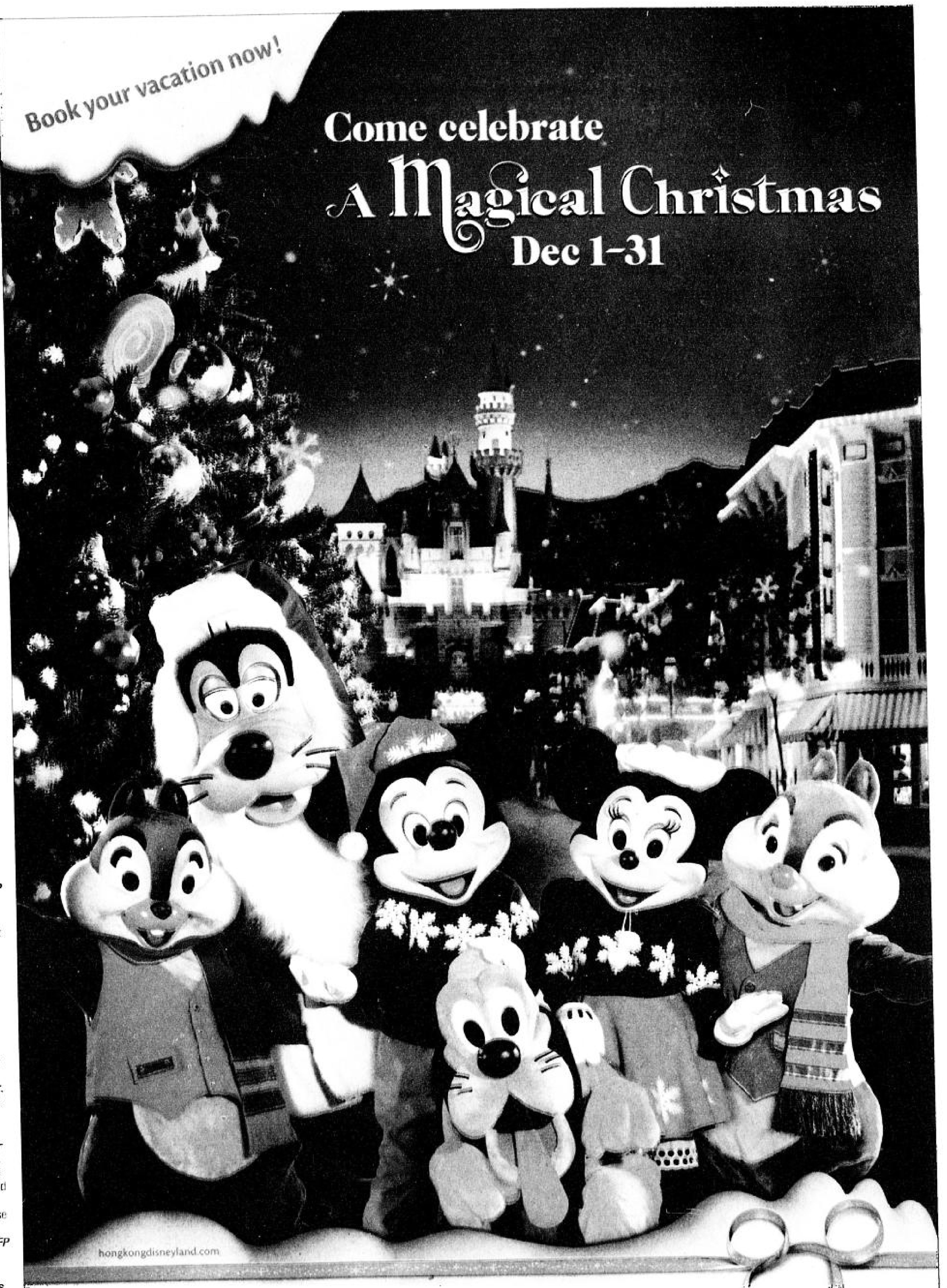
TEHRAN—Schools in the Iranian capital were shut down and the sick or elderly told to lock themselves indoors Tuesday as the city continued to choke on a thick blanket of yellow-brown smog. Tehran's Air Quality Control Unit said the Pollutant Standard Index (PSI) — a standard measurement incorporating carbon monoxide, dust and other pollutants — has hovered around the "very unhealthy" level of 160 for several days. Such alerts are becoming increasing common, with increased traffic causing the sprawling city's air to be deemed unhealthy for at least 100 days of the year. This week the situation is worse due to a total lack of wind. Many of the two million plus vehicles in the city of 10 million are more than 20 years old and consume cheap subsidized petrol at an alarming rate. Private car ownership has also exploded, with the public transport system failing to provide adequate coverage. The government has proposed various steps to resolve the problem, such as phasing out the old cars and restricting vehicle use on certain days of the week — but so far none have been effectively applied.

AFP

Saddam loses temper

BAGHDAD — Waving a finger and pounding his desk, Saddam Hussein told the judges in his trial to "go to hell" and vowed not to return to court Wednesday. The outburst came at the end of a day-long session Tuesday in which a woman, speaking behind a beige curtain and with her voice disguised, told of beatings, torture and sexual humiliation at the hands of security agents when she was a teenager. The ousted Iraqi president sat stone-faced and silent while she spoke. But after hours of testimony from the woman and another two witnesses, he exploded with anger. Saddam, dressed in a dark suit and white shirt and clutching a Quran, complained that he and the seven other defendants were tired and had been deprived of opportunities to shower, have a change of clothes, exercise or go for a smoke. By the end of the day, Saddam was back to his combative style. "I will not return," he shouted after the court decided to convene again Wednesday. "I will not come to an unjust court! Go to Hell!"

AP



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OPINION

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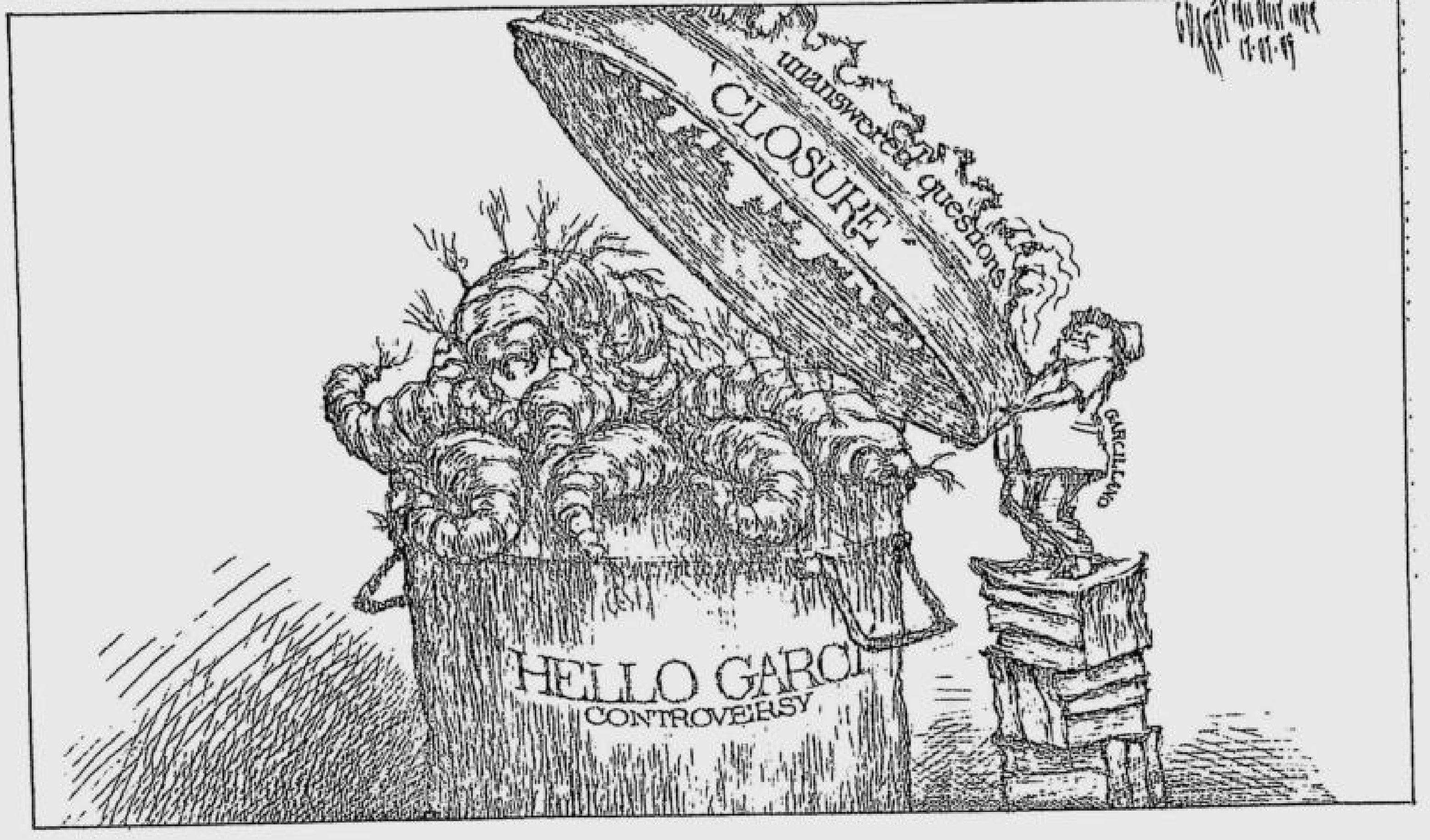


Dirtier and dirtier

EDITORIAL

FROM TIME TO TIME, SURVEYS ARE CONDUCTED among foreign businessmen to find out their perceptions about the extent of corruption in the countries of our region. And each time, our government dusts off its ritual explanations that actually it is fighting corruption, and that its efforts are being underappreciated and misunderstood. The latest such survey was done by the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) in 12 Asian economies. And again, Singapore and Hong Kong got the highest ratings as far as fighting corruption is concerned. India, China, Indonesia and Vietnam were seen to be making headway in fighting corruption. And the Philippines and Thailand were seen to have a worsening corruption.

What is remarkable about the latest PERC survey is that it goes beyond the usual "this country good, that country bad" rankings, and explains the reasons foreign businessmen gave for judging countries in certain way. In the Philippines, for example, executives worried that well-placed officials appeared to brush aside accusations that corruption was a problem. PERC explains: "They (Filipino officials) argue that those accusing the country of graft don't know what they are talking about, that the country has an 'independent ombudsman' who is doing an excellent job of fighting corruption, and that corruption is not really a big problem. This is not a line of argument that is bought by regional managers of multinationals and banks."

In the case of Thailand, while direct bribes, concessions and favors aren't as bothersome as before, PERC points out that businessmen believe that "the authorities change laws and regulations and practices, replacing them with new arrangements that benefit certain large industries and businesses, many of which happen to have close links with influential politicians."

Most disturbing of all, for us, is that PERC says investors are willing to overlook Thailand's corruption but not that of the Philippines. The question is, can our government be objective enough to realize the reasons for this? And can other entities, like political parties and those involved in labor organizing, take a long hard look at the conditions that foster continued investment in Thailand while discouraging investments here?

It's no coincidence that the Philippines and Thailand both have beleaguered media. Or at least, media that are increasingly at odds with the chief executives of both countries. In an interview in the newspaper Vietnam Bridge, Dr. Vinay Bhargava, a World Bank development expert, said that media are essential for fighting corruption. He cited the Philippines where "press centers operate strongly investigating corruption." He also pointed out the crucial role nongovernment organizations can play, noting that in Thailand, "non-governmental organizations take a great role in supervision."

Bhargava explained some of his research findings, which acquire essential relevance because they're based on a cross-country approach: "Our top discovery from typical research cases is that anti-corruption measures presided by an executive agency are ineffective because of state cornering. More clearly, that's the control of economic influence over the media or the investigation, prosecution and judgment system."

He went on to say: "The second discovery was that expansion of space for the media has brought about initial success in the fight against corruption. This is true in Thailand, where the press takes a great role in publicly giving strength to the chairman of the rural doctors' association in disclosing the corruption scandal of the Ministry of Public Health in 1998."

In other words, the findings of foreign businessmen go beyond their biases or mere opinions. Their rankings of countries is based on certain criteria, which countries like our own should pay attention to, as they provide concrete indications of what needs attention. At the root of any effective solution must be the realization that the results of corruption and efficiency surveys are not public relations challenges. They are not news to manage, massage and deflect. They are realities that require attention.

In other words, the antidote to harsh findings is transparency and resolve, not ritual denunciations and denials.

Tunnel vision

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

WE ARE A PEOPLE, OUR CRITICS INSIST, who assume that the world revolves around these 7,010 (at high tide) islands. An insular geography constricts our mindsets, they claim. And about half of our youth don't read even comics, an Ateneo survey found. We're hooked on noonday TV soaps. So, we know little about other countries—except probably those from where overseas foreign workers remit hard currency.

Philippine Human Development Report 2005 breaks out of this tunnel vision by analyzing the quality of life in 77 Philippine provinces, "as if they were countries unto themselves." As it has been doing since 1999, this biennial report then compares them against other nations.

"An international perspective has the advantage of putting in context the amount of effort that must still be done by national and local governments," explained the 1999 report co-produced by the UN Development Program and the Human Development Network.

Both the global and Philippine reports go beyond usual economic yardsticks, like gross national product. Instead, they employ innovative "human development indicators." These HDIs factor in life expectancy, functional literacy, health services, adjusted incomes, etc., and track quality of life more accurately.

The conclusions of this year's study are shattering:

"Manila's HDI is roughly equivalent to that of Thailand and Samoa, [but] lower than that of Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.

"Cavite's HDI is roughly equivalent to that of Lebanon, as Bataan's is to the Maldives ... Davao del Sur is roughy equivalent to Kyrgyzstan.

"Cebu finds itself trailing Georgia and Azerbaijan." About 28 percent of Cebuanos lack safe water and the province huddles in the same group with Zambales, La Union and Pangasinan.

The tailender is Maguindanao. Life expectancy there shrank from 53.2 years in 1997 to 52 today. That contrasts sharply with steady increases nationwide, as the late Fr. Wilhelm Fleiger of San Carlos University noted in his "gradients of mortality" study. Thus, PHDR brackets Maguindanao between Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

Pampangueños and Cebuanos now look forward to 72 years of life, roughly comparable with the life expectancy of Hungarians or Estonians. But this is still below a Singaporean's 78.

"Muslim Mindanao provinces continue to be plagued by the lowest life expectancy," PHDR 2000 pointed out then. There's been little change, PHDR 2005 found.

A 19-year gap still separates Bulakeños and Nuevo Ecijancos from those in Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, where life expectancy is 52 years, a figure that matches those of Congolese or Haitians.

Here are other findings, as reflected in the "International Comparison" section:

All Philippine provinces previously fell within the "medium human development category." Not anymore. Maguindanao has crashed through that floor. Poverty is widespread, with per capita income hovering around P14,198 compared to Rizal's P32,181. Functional literacy is 68 percent compared to Abra's 90 pecent.

The state of development of Misamis Oriental, Ilocos Norte and Nueva Vizcaya resembles that of El Salvador and Vietnam. Iloilo and Tarlac approximate that of Kyrgyzstan.

Lower down, and cramped between Nicaragua and Mongolia, are: Abra, Bohol, Cagayan and Camiguin. Bukidnon resembles Honduras, and Palawan is more like Tajikistan.

Disparities occur between neighboring provinces. Negros Occidental's higher human development places it alongside Indonesia. Way down are Negros Oriental (basic enrollment rate is only 77 percent) and Siquijor, stabled with Namibia.

Misamis Oriental and Ilocos Norte resemble El Salvador, but Misamis Occidental and Ilocos Sur are lower, pegged alongside Mongolia. (Out of every peso, the poorest 10 percent in Misamis Occidental have four centavos while the richest 10 percent consume 46 centavos.) Leyte resembles Moldova, but Southern Leyte, two blocks down, is more like South Africa.

Gaps also separate the Davao provinces. Del Sur is comparable to Kyrgyzstan and Del Norte Honduras. At the lowest rung, Davao Oriental is like Gabon.

Incomes make possible better nutrition, education and health services. The National Capital Region has income per head of P39,369, while Masbate reported P14,454, a fraction above Basilan's P13,326.

PHDR found that "there has been, more or less, a steady decline in poverty incidence over a 12 year period: from 40.9 percent to 25.1." But that shrinkage has been erratic—increasing from 1997 to 2000 (when Erap Para Sa Mahirap was the slogan), then dropping, although to levels "still higher than 1997."

Among the bottom provinces, "Sulu (where poverty incidence is 88 percent) and Tawi-Tawi find themselves among countries such as Laos, Ghana and Sudan. The three Samars—Northern, Eastern and Western—are tail-enders, too.

These new indicators "do nothing more than inform people and their leaders what is wrong and what is possible," the report adds. Sure. But politicians react to bad news in three stages. First, they ignore or deny the problem. Second, they shoot the messenger.

"Ultimately, the value (of HDIs) is redeemed only when people—seeing the gap between what is and what could be—begin to demand more of themselves, and of those who purport to represent their interests," the report says. That's when the third stage kicks in: You call the cops. The party's over.

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Complete and utter madness

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I HAD WANTED TO WRITE ABOUT SOMETHING important today, which is the 25th anniversary of John Lennon's death, but I got waylaid into this by the news about Garcillano that I saw on TV Monday night. (Fans of the Beatles might wish to add that to Garcillano's already humongous crimes.) Specifically, I saw Miriam Santiago regaling the world with her breathtaking concept of law and justice. Can you imagine if she had risen to the highest position of the Supreme Court? Raul Gonzalez as justice secretary, Norberto Gonzales as national security chief, and Miriam Santiago as chief justice? And probably Garci turned into Comelec chief at the end of the day? A veritable Orwellian nightmare characterized by Newspeak, where titles are the opposite of what they say.

Santiago was positively gloating. The opposition should be having sleepless nights, she said, with Garci threatening to name names. Apparently, they too had been calling the fellow throughout the campaign to ask for favors. Even as she spoke, Santiago said, corruption charges against the culprits were being readied. Calling up Garci is corruption, she said.

What about GMA? Shouldn't she be having sleepless nights too? Not at all, said Santiago, she should be deep in sleep's embrace. That was so, Santiago said, because GMA enjoyed presidential immunity from suit and—an attempt at humor!—because she now enjoyed the intimate company of a husband back from exile. What an un-aesthetic thought. Well, if I recall right, Santiago once displayed her legs as an example of God's generosity.

This isn't just mental masturbation, this is stopping thought altogether. Look where all this brings us:

One, we may prosecute senators and congressmen for calling up a Comelec official at an indeterminable time and place to help them with their electoral bid but not so a presumptive president who did so at a determinable time and place with the express intention to cheat. At the very least doesn't presidential immunity pertain only to presidents? The question precisely is whether GMA is so or not. Her calling up Garci says she's not. At the very most, who says presidential immunity exempts presidents from murder? Cheating at the polls murders a nation, which is worse than murdering an individual.

You can't charge a crooked president with crookedness so long as she's president? Then let's stop making her president and make her stand at the dock.

Two, we may take the word of Garci against anyone he capriciously chooses to implicate in cheating but not so a tape that clearly, objectively, and ineluctably shows GMA called him up to cheat. At the very least if it's true, as Garci alleges, that a horde of candidates called him up to ask him to cheat, what does that say about his character? The other Comelec officials didn't get those calls, only he did. That alone must show the kind of reputation he enjoys, which is that of an utter blackguard who sells votes where others sell only pirated DVDs. The fact that others called him up too doesn't exculpate GMA, it only damns him all the more. It makes him out to be a liar and a cheat, whose word is about as trustworthy as the one who said she would not run again but did.

Not quite incidentally, Garci has already indicted the quality of his forthcoming testimony by declaring that the five-month manhunt for him was superfluous as he never left the country. Someone asked me completely unbelievingly why he should lie even about that. I proposed to him that maybe, as with a scorpion, that's just Garci's nature. He can't help it.

At the very most, we have at the other side concrete evidence GMA cheated. The veracity of the "Hello Garci" tape remains undisputed to this day, Mike Defensor's defense having been refuted by the very expert he cited. True, that evidence cannot be used in court because it was illegally obtained, but that only means GMA can't be jailed on that basis, it doesn't mean she can't be ousted on that basis. We have a wiretapped conversation where a terrorist proposes to another to bomb a schoolhouse, we are not going to say, "Sorry, but we can't act on it, the wiretap is illegal." We stop the bombing, even if we can't jail the terrorists solely on that basis. Same here: We stop the usurpation, even we can't jail GMA solely on that basis.

And three, Garci may be free to regale the world with tales of pirates and cutthroats, but Gen. Francisco Gudani and Col. Alexander Balutan may not be allowed to speak their truth. Who is Garcillano? He is someone who, by his own avowal, cut his teeth (into its shark-like formation) with Leonardo Perez, Marcos' chief counter of votes and plebiscite results. Who are Gudani and Balutan? They are military officers who have forged a reputation of being honest men in a dishonest world. Balutan in particular lives with six children in a modest apartment, while Garcillano lives with who knows whom in who knows where surrounded by high walls and bodyguards. Where are they now? Garci is in Manila, where he enjoys pelf and privilege as the official *tirador*, while Gudani and Balutan are under arrest and awaiting court martial for saying their piece.

Santiago, a self-proclaimed constitutional expert, calls that law and due process. Imagine a basketball game where one player is exempt from foul, where a replay about his *pambabalya* can't be seen because it is inadmissible, where the crowd that witnessed his atrocities is forbidden to speak, and you get an idea of where we are. And that is called fair play. No wonder we won the Southeast Asian Games. But that's another story.

Hello, Juan de la Cruz, will we still get 85 million sane citizens in the end?

Garci proves too foxy for House

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

FORMER ELECTION COMMISSIONER VIRGILIO Garcillano, a lawyer, proved to be too wily and foxy yesterday at the joint committee hearing at the House of Representatives. A prominent lawyer, watching Garcillano testify in Congress, opined that when the witness is a lawyer, a cross-examination should not be prolonged, especially if conducted by non-lawyers. It should instead seek to nail the witness on evidence.

* * *

Garci said he couldn't have allowed all the cheating being alleged against him, as he was "no Superman." To manipulate election results to favor one candidate calls for an elaborate scheme that entails the cooperation of a lot of people, including election registrars, teachers, local officials, and even the military and police; he didn't have that kind of machinery, he added.

Whether or not he has, everyone knows cheating has been going on in the Comelec, under several administrations, made possible by the collusion of, perhaps, dozens of people. To stop cheating in the elections, the guilty ought to be sent to jail, so that the fear of the law is instilled in their hearts. But we all know that few have landed in jail for cheating. One reason for this is that politicians are not really interested to clean up the Comelec.

* * *

The hearing drew out denials, left and right, from politicians who figured in Garci's list of those who called or contacted him. One thing borne out by the hearing was that politicians called him for different reasons, some of which were not necessarily illegal. Take the case of Mindoro Rep. Amelita Villarosa. She admitted having called Garci, but she stressed that it was to bring to his attention the plight of school teachers who were being transferred to new assignments. But the problem is, where does one draw the line where a politician's intention is not too clear?

* * *

Garcillano refused to answer questions on whether he was the voice in the tapes, arguing that he has a petition pending before the Supreme Court on the admissibility of the tapes as evidence in court proceedings. He promised to answer all the questions of the House members once the high court ruled on his petition. But this early, the frustration is already telling on the House opposition. I caught Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano, out of frustration over Garci's dodging, calling for the election returns of all the regions across the country. But if that's the case, the matter might as well be referred to the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, which has jurisdiction over presidential protests.

The frustration may grow deeper as the wait gets longer. The House committees that conducted the tape inquiry months ago were given by the Court 10 days to respond to Garcillano's petition, but some committees may very well petition for an extension of the deadline. Moreover, Congress goes into a Christmas break on Dec. 14, which means the hearings would probably resume in mid-January yet.

* * *

For sheer gumption, few can surpass the Black and White Movement (BWM). Last November, that group of a few hundred people gave Vice President Noli de Castro until Nov. 30 to forsake the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo and to be anointed by BWM as its president. If De Castro refused to do so, said BWM, it would anoint Senate President Franklin Drilon to the top post, so the latter could call for elections in 45 days. Predictably, the BWM crowd gathered at De La Salle Greenhills waited and waited in vain. De Castro told the media that there was indeed a deadline for him on Nov. 30, but that was about relocating all the informal dwellers from along the *riles* in Bulacan, to a new residential site, so that the NorthRail project could finally start. De Castro also stressed that his loyalty was not to 10 people only but to the majority of the people who voted for him. The VP has been displaying a lot of political maturity, in stark contrast to the childishness of the BWM people who think gimmickry could substitute for substance.

* * *

Fr. Pierre Tritz, the saintly 91-year-old founder of Erda Foundation, did it again. His "E.T. Goes I.T." beat project entries from seven countries across Asia to win the Samsung DigitAll Hope 2005 Award, which carries with it P3 million in cash prize. Now on its third year, Samsung Asia's single largest regional social program has awarded grants amounting to over $1.5 million in its first two years. It promotes technology leadership to provide a brighter future for the less fortunate in our region. Past Samsung awardees have included an education technology center for the blind, an e-skills development training program for disadvantaged youths, a streetnet mobile technology van, and a digital audio book library and screen display reading program.

* * *

This year, Samsung recognized Erda Foundation's subsidiary, Erda Technical Vocational High School (Erda Tech), for its values education and technical training program, which has served over 500 students from poor families in Metro Manila. The skills training enables students to land a job right after high school and be of immediate help to their families. The values learned enable them to be good employees. Samsung's P3-million grant will give Erda Tech some breathing space from the *isang-kahig-isang-tuka* predicament of its first decade of existence. Father Tritz told me, during the awarding, that part of the funds will go into a full blast campaign to raise the enrollment to 2,000 students, as well as faculty development program. Orchids to Father Tritz, who firmly believes that only through training and education can the poor break the vicious cycle of poverty. Congratulations, too, to Samsung's top honcho, Maeng Dal Bae, for his firm's deep social commitment.

Oikocredit, small change, big impact

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

YOU MUST HAVE SEEN A P20 BILL WITH A circular doodle with three arrows coming out of it. You must have wondered whether that was someone's way of venting his ire on the state of the Philippine currency. But then when you looked closer, you must have read the words below that whorl: "UN Year of Microcredit 2005, Sustainable Microfinance Services for the Filipino Entrepreneurial Poor."

With a big bang, the 2005 UN Year of Microcredit ended last week with the so-called "Filipino entrepreneurial poor," composed mostly of mothers, bannering the theme, "Tinig ng Mga Nanay, Ating Ipatnubay" (Let the mothers' voices be our guide). Microfinance beneficiaries, enterprising mothers mostly, from different parts of the country attended the gathering in Quezon City and showed off what has become of the "small change" entrusted them. The delegation from Negros even brought in Masskara dancers to provide color.

Oikocredit and the Microfinance Council of the Philippines organized the event that capped the International Year of Microcredit.

"Small change, big impact" was the catchphrase used by microfinance institutions (MFI) to trumpet their successful efforts. Indeed, countless mothers who used to be very poor have leapt out of poverty with the help of microfinance, many of them with rags-to-raves stories to tell.

Please pass the Kleenex. Staying dry-eyed was hard to do when the video docu on Virginia Borde, 2005 Citigroup Microenterpreneur of the Year, was shown to the assembly. Abandoned wife and mother of several children, Borde rose from penury, thanks to microcredit, to become owner of farm machinery for rent to small farmers.

A woman from Camarines Sur was able to expand her market stall through a small loan from the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD). "Now," said this poster woman for microfinance, "my earnings have truly improved. I can afford to send my children to school and I can even save money for an emergency."

CARD, one of Oikocredit's partners here, is the conduit of loans worth 1.2 million euros.

Oikocredit is an international, church-related, private development financing institution. (Oiko comes from the Greek word *oikoumene* where the word ecumenism was derived. Ecumenism means Christian unity.)

Oikocredit's 30th year coincided auspiciously with the UN's International Year of Microcredit. Established in the Netherlands in 1975, Oikocredit is owned by members from around the world. These are churches, church-related groups, local parishes and individuals from developed countries. Oikocredit draws from the members' "small change" and "widow's mite" as well as from third parties.

May I say here that many NGO careerists and beneficiaries do not realize that the money they spend comes from the "widow's mite" of ordinary people in Europe and elsewhere.

Oikocredit is convinced that many of the world's poor stay poor because they have no access to credit. Mainstream banks think the poor are not creditworthy. So where can the poor get capital to start a small food stall, buy a second-hand sewing machine or a milking cow?

Oikocredit does not lend directly to beneficiaries. It channels the resources to MFIs.

"Walk a second mile." The exhortation from the bible (Matthew 5:41) pushes Oikocredit to go beyond the handing out of loans. The local Oikocredit staff must walk the second mile to monitor the projects and give assistance should problems arise. What are the local realities? What factors contribute to success or failure?

Two friends of mine, veteran church development workers Delle Tiongson Brouwers and Ging Ledesma work with Oikocredit in Europe and Asia to walk the second mile.

In the beginning, Oikocredit was regarded with skepticism. There was this belief that economic initiatives of the poor will dissipate and so will Oikocredit's investments in them. But the unpredictable happened. The poor paid their loans. In all of Oikocredit's 30 years, only 10 percent of disbursed loans were written off. Of course, realities such as typhoons, disease, civil wars and economic meltdowns have to be factored in.

Oikocredit is present in more than 30 countries where more than 400 projects are being assisted. Some 24,000 churches, parishes, religious orders and individuals worldwide have joined and bought Oiko shares.

Investment in Oikocredit is now more than 200 million euros. No investor has yet lost a penny. Investors are not there for the money. They believe in Oikocredit's goals: to provide the poor access to credit and to give churches and individuals an instrument for socially responsible investments.

Investors can withdraw their investment when necessary and receive a modest dividend of 2 percent.

In the Philippines, Oikocredit is exposed to 27 MFIs, cooperatives, small and medium enterprises, fair-trade organizations and other groups with proven social relevance. Loan size is from 50,000 to 2 million euros; term of loan is from one to six years. Interest rate is flexible and depends on the risks involved.

"Let us be clear: microfinance is not charity," UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has said. "It is a way to extend the same rights and services to low-income households that are available to everyone else. It is a recognition that poor people are the solution, not the problem. It is a way to build on their ideas, energy and vision. It is a way to grow productive enterprises, and to allow communities to prosper."

Oikocredit Philippines' e-mail address is: office.ph@oikocredit.org.

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Seductive reasoning

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THERE WERE MANY HIGHLY INTERESTING points that emerged during the House's joint committee hearing yesterday. The most interesting, of course, was the zest displayed by Virgilio Garcillano not only in defending himself, but also in going on the offensive against his detractors. In the process, he invoked the Bart Simpson defense: "I didn't do it, nobody saw me do it, you can't prove anything!" Which, as we all know, has nothing to do with what he really did, but rather, on the inability of anyone to contradict the person making the defense.

Garcillano insisted he never cheated; that he could not have accomplished the electoral miracles attributed to him because he was only one person; furthermore, that he could name people from the Ilocos regions to Mindanao who did the actual cheating, but he was never a party to it. He didn't do it. Nobody saw him do it. No one can prove he did anything like it. And if anyone is thinking of proving things, he can prove a whole lot of things, too. All of them confusing; and some of them—whether he meant them to be or not—devastating to himself and his interests.

He said his rights are being violated, because the law protects those who are wiretapped; but he does not admit to having been tapped; but he just might (or might not!) admit if an original, unaltered tape is produced (which assumes there's only one tape); and he has not (yet) filed a complaint to defend and assert his rights as a person who has been subjected to wiretapping (but he's preparing to file one just in case). And, in addition, since he has filed a petition before the Supreme Court, he cannot answer questions until the court has handed down a ruling. Such a happy coincidence that the petition he filed prevents him from answering questions!

He said the President should be the one to explain who she referred to as the "Comelec official" she talked to; and that even if she did talk to a Comelec official, the President was wrong to apologize because nothing's wrong with a President talking to a Comelec official. And anyway, he can only think of having had one conversation with the President—but only the President can say what they discussed, if, indeed, they discussed anything at all, much less anything improper.

He said he does not deny the conversations, but the details should come from the persons he had conversations with. He refused to answer whether any of the party, or parties, he had conversations with, had asked him to do something improper with regard to the elections. So, Garcillano has said something, but they meant nothing, and his nothings should not be construed as something (as more than one congressman pointed out, it was a refusal to answer, or a way of sidestepping, questions).

It all went rather well for Garcillano, except that Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. periodically peppered his arguments with holes for their legal flaws. At one time, Rep. Ronaldo Zamora proceeded, in his inimitable manner (half-purr and half-bite to the throat), to roll over the former election commissioner by asking Garcillano whether he was invoking the anti-wiretapping law or not. I couldn't avoid the mental image of an elephant seal happily crushing a spider monkey. That was a delightful Animal Planet moment.

As of this writing, what has Garcillano said? Everything, and nothing. His main interest seems to be the 10 days the Supreme Court has given the House to respond to his petition. That takes the discussion, at worst, into the New Year; and, at best, offers the hope that the Supreme Court will step in to serve what he wants—invoking the protection of the law without actually presenting himself as a victim of wiretapping. This is not only having your cake and eating it; this is demanding to be allowed to exercise eminent domain over the bakeshop.

Perhaps, the most significant moment was the one that took place without the benefit of words being broadcast, only actions being beamed over the airwaves. After Rep. Constantino Jaraula appealed, "for humanitarian considerations," to allow a frustrated—and frustrating—Garcillano a break for lunch, the former Comelec official scuttled over to a brooding Rep. Edcel Lagman, and proceeded to emphatically say some things to him. Lagman, looking like he wanted to be anywhere else but where the entire viewing public could see him being so enthusiastically engaged in conversation by Garcillano, remained impassive. Then Garcillano was whisked away for lunch.

Garcillano is relying on a kind of circular, but seductive reasoning. Basically, he relies in St. Paul's definition of faith: the "substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things unseen." What he has presented are the shadows of facts, not actual facts; the conclusions he wants, based on the shadows, are the illusion of reality, not reality itself; he wants us to accept what he says, or—to be precise—the little he is willing to say, as Gospel Truth. At this point, faith is the last thing Garcillano should be inspiring in anyone.

Hard as he might try to tar every politician with the brush used against the President, there will be the politicians who did not call him. You only need a few of them, as Representative Locsin has shown, to completely dismantle whatever case Garcillano is trying to build for himself. And there is the fact that lawyers hate—but which happens when politics overlaps law: you may explain something to the satisfaction of a lawyer's mind, but it isn't always enough to convince a non-lawyer.

Greener pastures

YOUNG BLOOD

Jayson M. Barola

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

ASSALAM ALAIKOM.

I work in Bahrain, an island kingdom in the Arabian Gulf. It is connected to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the four-lane, 25-kilometer long King Faisal Causeway. I should point out that this small country, which is probably the size of Batangas, is an "open country" where foreigners can practice "Westerly" culture in this largely conservative region of the Middle East. No wonder, Saudi nationals as well as other Arabs often jump into their cars and cross the bridge to spend their weekends in here and have a good time.

Not surprisingly, since the pasture is greener, one finds many Filipinos "grazing" here. One doesn't have to look far to find Inday Mayordoma (a domestic helper), Maria Kusinera (a cook), Kapitan Sixto and Juan Sea Man (a ship captain, mate, rigger, diver, fisherman, name it, and they are there doing work offshore). There are many Pedro Karpintero (carpenter), Pablo Mekaniko (mechanic) and Doc Aga *na nag-nurse na pala*. The dreaded but effective Ms Tapia teaches here without her cane or stick, of course (she's still good but not so intimidating anymore without her stick and raised eyebrows). There are PRC-certified professionals as well as those with "Recto doctorates," whose degrees are *dinuktor.* Engineer Efren is supervising one aspect of the project to extend the land area by claiming the sea or helping build modern-day Towers of Babel, skyscrapers and refineries. I can give you more names, titles and professions (*mga raket at kumisyon ba ga*), but that would be a hundred times longer than "Schindler's List." But the bottom line is, we all came here with our diplomas, our carabao English, our empty wallets, our hopes and our desire to find our place in the sun (which translates into fortune and money, really).

The thing is, it is not only us carabaos who are grazing in Bahrain. The country is now flooded with Asian migrant workers in what looks like a giant Asian invasion. It's getting tough and very competitive out there in the "fields." Cheaper laborers and professionals have been flocking in from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other countries of South Asia. Competition is the name of the game between us and our neighbors, like the Indonesians, the Malaysians and the Thais.

I am proud to say that we Filipinos can hold our ground in terms of skills, talents, abilities, our quality of work and our working habits and attitude. Most employers, both Arab and foreigner, will attest to that. They will say: "Filipini good. Filipini lady beautiful. Others no good."

But people from other countries are catching up. Their camel, mule, donkey, elephant, horse or Brahman cow English is now as good as our carabao English. Maybe their education and skills are developing even as ours deteriorate. Maybe they learned from us Filipinos, or they learned from their own kind or from others. Or it could be the result of globalization.

Or perhaps their labor attachés, embassies and foreign affairs ministries support them very well by looking for potential markets as well as promoting their interests in the international labor market. Their government offices and ministries are outperforming our Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), etc. (We have so many offices and we use so many acronyms that some of our *kababayan* think that POLO or OWWA is the name of a department as in, "Department of OWWA.")

Mind you, other Asian workers' salaries, talent fees, contract fees, kickback and *sahod,* whatever you may call it, are lower and that gives them an edge over us. My Bahraini friend Mohammed told me skills, attitudes and workmanship are one thing, while salaries and fees are another thing all together. So the heat is on! Juan, Sixto, Inday, Maria, Pedro, Pablo, Engineer Efren, Doc Aga cum nurse, Constancia (Ms Tapia), myself and thousands of Filipinos here are being pitted against thousands named Tom, Dick, Harry, Ahmed, Abdullah, Raja, Mohandas, Akira, Kim, Jung, Khan, Gopal, Sonia, Shah, Suchet, Khumar, Ispirikitik, Tuktuk (I'm not sure if I got some of their names correctly; some foreign names are very hard to pronounce and hard to spell with all those consonants and silent letters.)

I remember one particular conversation with a fellow Filipino worker:

"*Pare*, why did you come here to Bahrain?"

"Same as yours: to find greener pastures?"

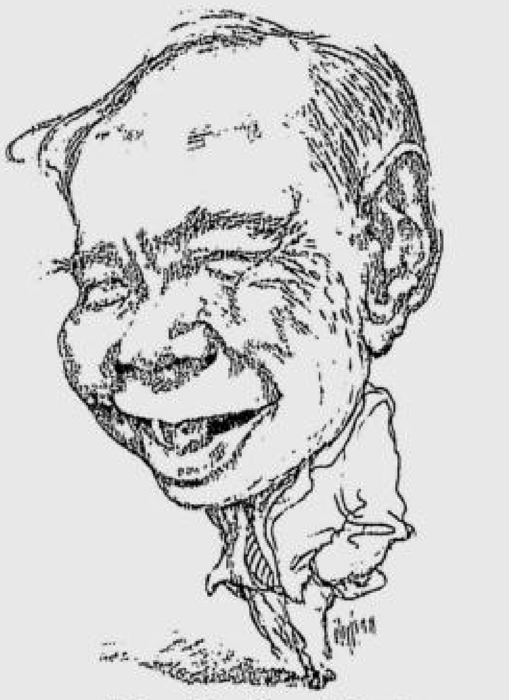
"If that's so, why did you resign? Your salary was not that bad."

"Nah, they will probably hire two Patanis (Pakistani) or two Panas (Indian) to replace me, so they might just as well terminate my contract. But anyway, I will be going back home. Homesick *na eh.* And then I will apply again, you know, maybe in Dubai. Open country *daw dun. Kahit saan na lang* where the pasture is greener."

"Good luck *na lang, pare! Pakibigay mo na lang ke misis itong* package. *Sige pre.* Better grass next time!"

Jayson M. Barola, 25, works as an industrial engineer in Bahrain and is feeling a little homesick already.

IN THE NEWS



Virgilio Garcillano

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Beggars in uniform

I AM MARRIED TO AN AUSTRALIAN and have been living in Australia for 26 years. My husband and I recently visited the Philippines for a vacation. It was a wonderful feeling to be once again with my Filipino family after a long time. But some memories make me feel sad, frustrated, angry, dismayed and embarrassed. These are memories of our "encounters" with military, police and customs personnel.

Although corruption is not new to me in the Philippines, I cannot understand why people in uniform, supposedly representing our nation, should be practically "begging" on our streets and airports.

As we were traveling from Cagayan de Oro in a jeep to Tandag, Surigao del Sur, to visit our mother's grave last Nov. 1, we were stopped, without any reason at all but just to ask money for coffee, by uniformed armed men manning a checkpoint. What a shame! How low these government authorities could be. Don't tell me they could not afford to buy a cup of coffee! Even so, why would they sacrifice their pride for a cup of coffee? But what I really hated was that these people were using their authority for personal gain. Who could argue with an armed man?

In Manila, as we were cruising in a taxi along Roxas Boulevard, we were stopped by a police officer who asked for money for a snack. I wondered if he decided to do that after seeing a foreigner inside the car.

At the international airport, we were supposed to pay a departure tax of P1,100 for the two of us. I handed P2,000 to the customs officer. But he never gave me back my change. That was worse than begging—that was barefaced theft.

I wonder to this day if these people have any sense of dignity or self-respect. Otherwise, they should not be doing such shameful acts, much less to foreigners. These government officials are an embarrassment to Filipinos who are known to be a proud people.

—IRMA WARE,
mahent@optusnet.com.au

Proven alive but still pensionless

THERE IS NO DEARTH OF NEWS on the supposed rigging of the 2004 election, pork barrel, etc., etc. But nothing is being reported on the elderly's non-receipt of pension and the insensitive policy directing senior citizens to go to an office of the Social Security System and prove they are in fact still alive and, therefore, need the pension due them. But why is it that even after acceding to their "appear requirement" (at an SSS office here in the Philippines or at a consular office abroad, where that would mean paying $25), the SSS still do not remit the pension of this retiree? Why?

A Ms Canlas said that the SSS would send somebody to the retiree's residence to verify if the retiree is still alive, but this is not done. Retirees are required to appear at an SSS/consular office even if these seniors find it difficult to travel. This only lends credence to rumors that some big bosses derive hefty earnings by investing the funds meant for the retirees and use the name of members in fraudulent loans and, heaven knows, what else. But as I said these are just rumors, apparently coming from the grapevine.

All I want is to state my case: the SSS suspended my pension in May 2005. (I found it difficult to go to the consular office in Manhattan from Queens in New York.) But I appeared at the Quezon City head office in June (traveling halfway around the world with the help of a wheel chair). It's December now; seven months have passed since I complied with the "appear directive" of the SSS. Still, I haven't received a single centavo of my pension. No explanation has been given to me, but there was not a hint of hesitation when that office advised me of the suspension of my pension because of non-appearance. My monthly pension is only P2,904, not enough to cover the cost of medicines. For example Diovan, one of the medicines I take, has a discounted price of P1,062. That's immediately 68 percent of the pension. So, again, why?

What's going on at the SSS? Somebody should investigate. Somebody should help the "oldies" so they will receive what is due them on time. In these times of high prices, a centavo can help a lot in easing the plight of senior citizens. That is me and thousands of other retirees.

—VERA MAY GREY,
969 Schuyler St.,
Mandaluyong City

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Which is the spider, which is the fly?

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE NOV. 28 column of Fr. Joaquin Bernas. The Constitution states: "Any amendment to, or revision of the Constitution may be proposed by the Congress..." (Sec 1 (1), Article XVII) Further, it provides that such amendment may be proposed by a three-fourths vote of all its members.

The process cannot be stated any clearer.

If this were a matter of Church dogma or moral law, I will not dare argue against Bernas. But a basic rule in statutory construction prescribes that when the law is clear, as in this case, there is no need to interpret. Perhaps, the crux of Bernas' dilemma is the word "joint" which was in the 1935 Constitution but is absent in the 1987 Constitution. In its place is the word "Congress."

May I respectfully break down the four questions posed by Bernas:

1. Is a resolution necessary in order to set the ball rolling for constitutional revision?
2. Should the House pass a resolution, what options does the Senate have for responding to it?
3. If no joint session is approved, may Congress still propose changes?
4. If the two Houses decide to propose amendments without a joint session, how should they do it?

My answer to the first question is a resounding yes. A resolution is necessary because amending the Constitution is a very serious business, thus it requires the input of the whole Congress, meaning, its approval by three-fourths of the combined membership of the Senate and the House.

The resolution should set the date, time and place of the Assembly. This is necessary because there will be a roll call to determine the three-fourths presence and concurrence.

On the second question, the senators have the option to attend and be counted, or they can disregard the resolution and challenge its constitutionality before the Supreme Court. But with or without the senators, the amendment process can proceed, provided the three-fourths vote of Congress is achieved.

To the third question, my answer is: no joint resolution is needed and separate voting is not required. Otherwise, the Constitution would have so stated. The theory of separate voting would give a mere seven recalcitrant senators the power to deny Congress and the Filipino people any constitutional amendment. With or without the senators, therefore, so long as three-fourths of the whole Congress so decides, amendments may be introduced.

As to the fourth query, I believe a Constitutional Convention or a "People's Initiative" would be very expensive, cumbersome, divisive and confrontational.

The allusion to the limerick of the fly and the spider would be correct if the Senate were the spider and the House the fly.

—FRUCTUOSO SUZARA,
executive director, Social Policy
Advocacy, 15 Charlyville,
White Plains, Quezon City

Tree-cutting maniacs

THIS IS A RESPONSE TO THE letter titled "Logging doesn't have to destroy biodiversity." (PDI, 11/29/05)

The lawyer of San Jose Timber Corp. talked about "responsible and sustainable logging practices." This must be the "selective logging" Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile described as "harvest(ing) trees that are at least 70 cm in diameter," as if it were as simple as cutting plants in a garden.

Cutting a tree of that size destroys the smaller trees that it falls on. And each log, weighing at least three tons, is dragged through the forest floor by a bulldozer for kilometers, in the process uprooting all the trees of all sizes lying on its path. Multiply that process 10 times a day and we have a rough picture of how "responsible and sustainable" selective logging can be.

With such destruction, timber is still "renewable." But while SJTC will get quick big bucks for the destruction—the people of Samar just have to wait for another 20 years for the forest to recover.

The lawyer said SJTC is "willing to discuss in a proper forum the environmental and economic issues." This means the people's decision-making process will be limited since the discussions will just be "about environmental and economic issues," not anymore whether or not Samareños like SJTC operating in their midst.

And since this will involve only "those living within the sphere of the logging operations," it will thus exclude the farmers downstream of Catubig River, to name a few.

The lawyer said that the SJTC has "remained true to its covenant with the government and the people of the island of Samar."

That must have been easy since that "government" was, for the most part (1977 to 1986) the martial law regime with Enrile then as its defense minister and chief enforcer.

Was that covenant with the people of the island of Samar the cause or the effect of Enrile's militarization of Samar which, at one time, was "guarded" by as many as eight battalions? Did the terms of that covenant include the atrocities and human rights violations committed by these battalions?

The SJTC lawyer wanted us to see a connection between the sustainable exploitation of timber in other countries today to what that SJTC will do in the indefinite future, if allowed to operate. But he did not want us to see a connection of the three events that undeniably happened in a span of three to four months—Enrile lawyering for Defensor's confirmation; then the Enrile-owned SJTC submitting a request for the lifting of the moratorium; and Defensor granting the request.

Somewhere else, the same SJTC lawyer called us as "tree hugging fanatics." Since this puts us in the company of bishops—we take it as a compliment. We can only wonder if the same lawyer feels comfortable being associated with tree-cutting maniacs that have given the country the Samar floods of 1989, the Ormoc tragedy of 1992, and the recent floods in Quezon and Aurora.

—(SGD.) Fr. Cesar Aculan,
president,
Samar Island
Biodiversity Foundation

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Flooded Calapan cries for help

CALAPAN CITY—OFFICIALS SENT OUT CALLS for help following floods that isolated most of the city, soaking at least 85,000 residents and their homes in floodwater.

In a report, the Office of Civil Defense said at least 13,000 persons have been displaced by heavy rains and floods in three other provinces.

Doy Leachon, Calapan City administrator, said rains brought flooding to almost the entire city "and there is still no help coming."

Officials said a dike that kept water in the Bucayao River from flooding Calapan City was breached.

Leachon said the water is now chest-deep and the city only has three rubber boats. "We could not reach most of our rural barangays," he said.

Floods prevented vehicles from reaching Caticlan and southern parts of Mindoro.

At least 200 families were moved to the Jose Leido Memorial School gym.

Gov. Arnan Panaligan said the Sangguniang Panlalawigan declared the province under a state of calamity.

Bad weather prevented Air Force helicopters on search and rescue missions from taking off.

"We're still waiting for the weather to cooperate," said Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Command.

The OCD said Lucena City was worst hit by floods in Quezon, forcing at least 12,655 persons to evacuate.

Jay Lim, program officer for Mt. Banahaw of the environmental group Tanggol Kalikasan, said the Lucena floods were caused by logging, slash-and-burn farming, quarrying on Mt. Banahaw.

Malou Maralit, Lucena social welfare and development officer, said the evacuees returned home starting yesterday.

Three teenagers—Nonoy Geneblazo, Allan Calleja and Allan Minorca—were honored for saving three children and their grandmother from drowning in a Lucena village.

The OCD also reported a landslide in Capalonga, Camarines Norte. There was no casualty.

The Department of Public Works and Highways started clearing operations yesterday. *Dona Pazzibugan in Manila and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Marciano Virola and Joanna Los Baños, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Lafayette says small scale mines do more harm

By Blanche S. Rivera

STILL REELING FROM THE FLAK drawn by the two mine spills in its supposedly flagship mining project, Australian firm Lafayette Mining Ltd. urged its critics to also go after the more damaging operations of small-scale miners in the country.

Lafayette chief executive officer Andrew McIlwain said small-scale miners, particularly in Aroroy, Masbate and Mt. Diwalwal in Davao, were doing more harm to the environment than legitimate commercial operators like Lafayette.

"If you would form a view about what we do, I'd also want you to go to illegal miners operating in Masbate. They pump cyanide straight down the river," McIlwain said in an interview.

"Dont talk to me about the damage that we're doing before you got a look at somebody else," he said.

McIlwain made the statement after local officials said last week that the P1.4-billion Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic Project could also be responsible for the high mercury content found in waters surrounding Prieto Diaz, another island about 45 minutes away by boat from Rapu-Rapu.

"There's an accusation (against) the project about the potential mercury poisoning of fish. We don't use mercury. No one in modern mining industry uses mercury; that went out with the horse-drawn carriage," he said.

Prieto Diaz Mayor Benito Doma presented to media a report by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources saying the mercury content of samples taken from its coastal waters had higher than the acceptable .02 ppm mercury content.

"The question is: Why is there mercury in the water? I don't know of any other operation here that could be the source of mercury," Doma said.

Mercury is an element whose toxicity increases as it goes up the food chain. Mercury in small fish that are eaten by bigger fish and are consumed by humans become more toxic.

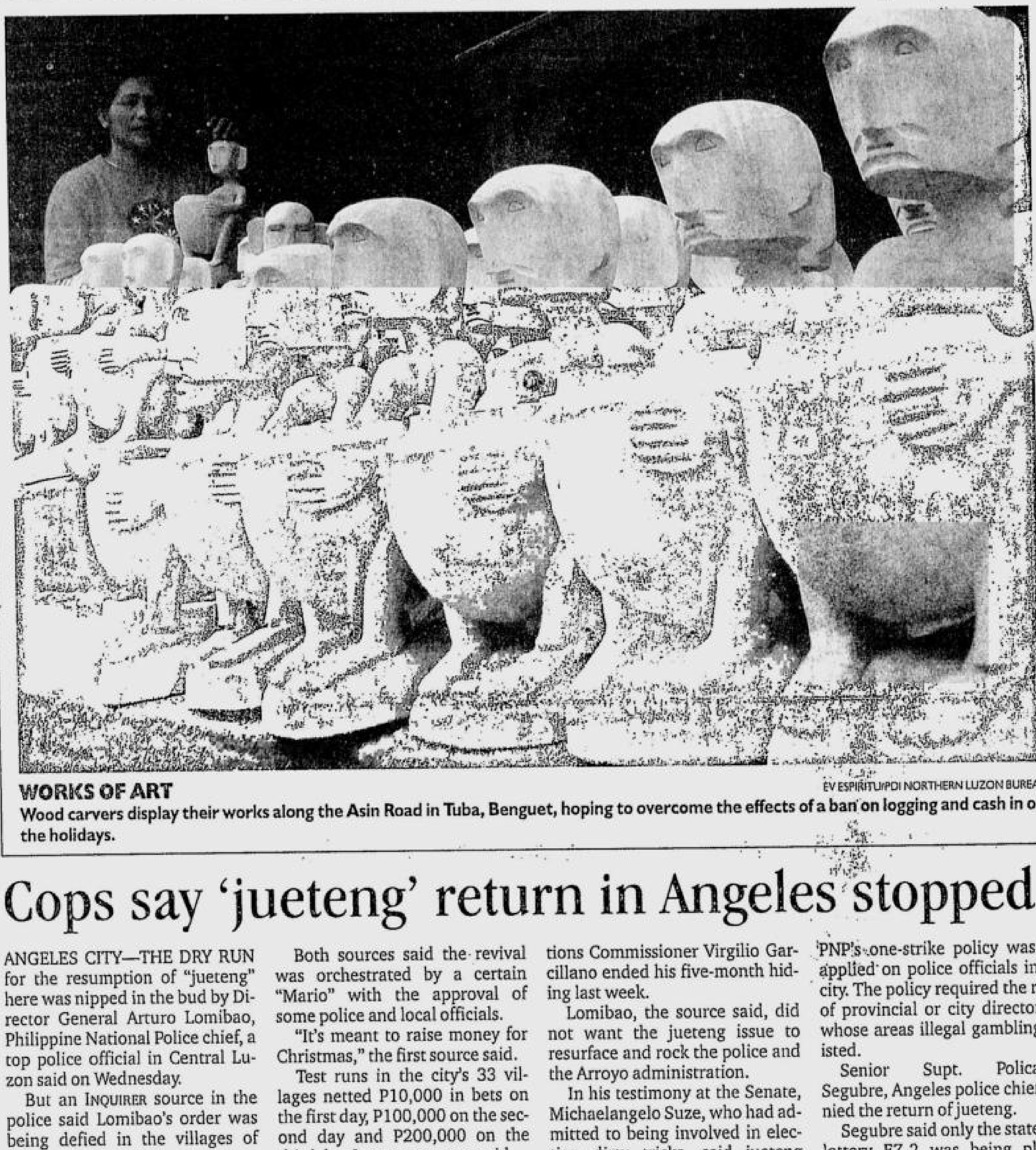
Doma said there has been no reported fish kills in Prieto Diaz or any illnesses due to fish consumption but the people from the city have stopped buying fish from Prieto Diaz fishermen.

McIlwain said Lafayette plans to bring people inside the mine site after its rehabilitation to assure them that Lafayette's operations were safe.

He said the mine site would soon be opened to school groups, teachers, church people, environmentalists and residents to show them that an industrial area can be well-managed.

"We have the objective of ensuring that there is no repeat of this (mine spill)...We want to be as open as we possibly can be and take this opportunity to educate... people in the Philippines about responsible mining," McIlwain said.

McIlwain said people in the mining industry were "not that crazy" to do what their critics suspect they do, such as deliberately release toxic materials into bodies of water.



EV ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

WORKS OF ART
Wood carvers display their works along the Asin Road in Tuba, Benguet, hoping to overcome the effects of a ban on logging and cash in on the holidays.

Cops say 'jueteng' return in Angeles stopped

ANGELES CITY—THE DRY RUN for the resumption of "jueteng" here was nipped in the bud by Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, a top police official in Central Luzon said on Wednesday.

But an INQUIRER source in the police said Lomibao's order was being defied in the villages of Sapang Bato, Santa Teresista, Amsic, Malabanias and at the Epza resettlement in this city's outskirts.

Both sources said the revival was orchestrated by a certain "Mario" with the approval of some police and local officials.

"It's meant to raise money for Christmas," the first source said.

Test runs in the city's 33 villages netted P10,000 in bets on the first day, P100,000 on the second day and P200,000 on the third day, INQUIRER sources said.

The revival of jueteng, the source said, was hatched long before former Commission on Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano ended his five-month hiding last week.

Lomibao, the source said, did not want the jueteng issue to resurface and rock the police and the Arroyo administration.

In his testimony at the Senate, Michaelangelo Suze, who had admitted to being involved in election dirty tricks, said jueteng money was used to pay off election officials.

The second source said the PNP's one-strike policy was not applied on police officials in the city. The policy required the relief of provincial or city directors in whose areas illegal gambling existed.

Senior Supt. Policarpio Segubre, Angeles police chief, denied the return of jueteng.

Segubre said only the state-run lottery EZ-2 was being played and was being mistaken for jueteng. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Pagadian cop chief fired over rise in crimes

PAGADIAN CITY—THIS CITY'S chief of police was fired for failing to curb drug trafficking, stop the proliferation of loose firearms and solve killings.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes announced his decision to remove Chief Insp. Robert Bahian after the police chief finished reading his report on illegal drugs and other crimes in the city during the meeting of the Western Mindanao Regional Peace and Order Council (WMR-POC).

Reyes asked Mayor Samuel Co if he was satisfied with the performance of the police chief but before Co could answer, Western Mindanao police commander Chief Supt. Prospero Noble said the reason the Pagadian police cannot arrest criminals, particularly underworld leaders, is their fear of reprisal.

Noble added that the "best solution" in the city is to appoint a police officer who can arrest criminals without fear of reprisal and "preferably those not living in the city, where their families are not vulnerable to reprisal."

The council session was called to discuss the city's peace and order situation after the Nov. 15 ambush that killed Councilor Sultan Abdul Marcaban and his five security escorts.

A self-confessed gunman said a councilor from another town, who is also related to a Zamboanga del Sur mayor, was behind the ambush. *Michael F. Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Capiz sets sights on reviving 'muscovado'

By Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

SIGMA, CAPIZ—IN THE NEXT two years, farmers here will be producing "muscovado" (unrefined) sugar, reviving an industry that used to provide livelihood to residents.

The proponent of the Muscovado Sugar Processing Project (MSPP) is the local government unit (LGU) of this fourth class town located in the second district of Capiz.

The sugar industry in Capiz dates back to Spanish times when Capiceños plant sugar cane purposely for making muscovado sugar. A number of mills were in operation in Capiz then, until the Elizalde-owned sugar central in President Roxas town came into operation during the post-World War II era and made these mills obsolete.

All the muscovado sugar mills in Capiz were closed and abandoned. However, in the 1980s, the sugar industry slumped and both the sugar farmers and workers suffered the effects of the economic downturn, prices of sugar fluctuated to the advantage of the traders but to the disadvantage of the small farmers.

Survival

In Antique, however, where there are no big sugar centrals operating except 'muscovado' mills, sugar farmers and muscovado millers still enjoy good businesses despite small production volume.

With no recovery of the sugar industry in sight, the sugar planters of Sigma have thought of reviving the old muscovado sugar milling industry in Capiz.

Currently, Antique and Iloilo supply the muscovado sugar requirement of the province at a relatively higher price due to transport costs.

Sigma Mayor Roberto Sualog said the establishment of this project is in line with the national agenda of President Macapagal-Arroyo of creating one million jobs.

He said at least 454 farmers would benefit from the project—22 production workers, 48 sugar cane planters and 384 sugar farm workers.

Sualog said Barangay Pari-an was chosen to be the host of the processing plant because it has a high poverty incidence and has a vast area for sugar cane distributed among agrarian reform barangays.

Fighting poverty

He added that Pari-an, being a convergence area for antipoverty efforts of different national agencies, would be a logical choice to set up a post harvest facility.

Rep. Fredenil Castro, of Capiz's second district, has provided on Nov. 25 an initial P138,000 to farmers of Barangay Pari-an as financial assistance for the "muscovado" project.

The funds, taken from Castro's Countrywide Development Fund, would be used for the training and holding of seminars for the Pari-an Small Planters Association.

Castro hailed local officials of Sigma for establishing another project that would create employment and livelihood opportunities to provide additional income to farmers.

CHR death row data list 18 children, 11 elderly

DAVAO CITY—AT LEAST 18 children and 11 elderly persons are in the country's death row, a report by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said.

The report, which was distributed during the European Union-sponsored human rights dialogue on the death penalty and restorative justice held here on Monday, also said most of the convicts are poor.

The CHR said there are now 1,180 death row prisoners in the country, 35 of them women.

The CHR report said 46 percent of the death row prisoners are convicted of rape; 24 percent, murder; 12 percent, kidnapping; 12 percent, qualified robbery; and 4 percent for drug related cases.

The Coalition Against the Death Penalty (CADP), which is made up of civil society organizations, said most of the prisoners in death row are unschooled and can only avail themselves of the governments' free legal services provided by the undermanned and underpaid Public Attorney's Office (PAO).

Ambassador Jan de Kok, EU head of mission to the Philippines, said he believed that the death penalty should be abolished.

"The position of the EU against the death penalty is mainly based on moral grounds. The EU has a firm belief in the inherent dignity of all human beings and the inviolability of the human person," De Kok told delegates here.

He said on Nov. 17, the EU parliament adopted a resolution against the death penalty in the Philippines, supported by majority of its members.

"The EU has affirmed its commitment to the principles of liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, since its inception in the early 1950s," De Kok said.

De Kok said these principles constitute the building block for the EU and they are crucial for peace, stability and prosperity in any society.

"It's a dead law (death penalty). We have not executed anybody," Rep. Prospero Nograles said in a separate interview.

Since the restoration of the death penalty in 1994, the government has executed seven people but in 2000, then President Joseph Estrada stopped the executions while President Macapagal-Arroyo granted reprieves.

The Supreme Court, from 1995 to 2002, reviewed 683 capital cases involving 801 prisoners, who were sentenced to death.

"In the study on death penalty in the Philippines, Amnesty International found that innocent people may be sentenced to death through judicial error; death penalty is the ultimate cruel and inhuman punishment and has no deterrent effect," said Persida Rueda-Acosta, PAO's chief public attorney. *Joselle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Quezon folk recover from tragedy

INFANTA Bishop Rolando Tria-Tirona inspires his flock during a gathering at the town's covered court to continue working together toward the complete rehabilitation of their place.
DELFIN T. MALLARI JR.

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Infanta, Quezon

A YEAR AFTER HEAVY RAINS BROUGHT floods, mud and logs crashing to northern Quezon, destroying homes and farms, and killing hundreds of people, the fields are green again in the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar, new houses have sprung, and livelihood projects have given hope to the communities.

"We sincerely believe that the strong faith of the people has something to do with the miraculous and phenomenal resurrection of our place," said Bishop Rolando Tria-Tirona, head of the Prelature of Infanta.

In the evening of Nov. 29 last year, the Agos River between Infanta and General Nakar overflowed following days of typhoons. The towns were inundated with mud and water, and huge logs and other forest debris cascaded from the Sierra Madre.

In Real, more than 100 people in Barangay Tignoan sought shelter at the Repador Building, but an avalanche of loose soil from a hilly portion across the road knocked down the two-story structure. Only four persons, three of them children, survived after being buried for 10 days under the building.

Almost 1,000 people died and at least 450 others went missing in the three towns. Millions of pesos worth of property, farm lands and public infrastructure facilities were destroyed.

New life

On Nov. 28, the farm produce from the erstwhile calamity areas in Infanta was displayed in an exhibit. It showed more promising bounties from the fields, Tirona said.

Irrigation canals have started to supply water again to the muddy farmlands after portions were repaired through the government's Food for Work Program.

The prelature's Social Action Center promoted organic farming, communal and upland planting, and scientific farm techniques.

It also initiated a rice-testing program to find out what variety was suitable to the soil conditions. The Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development, which is based in Los Baños, Laguna, was tapped to conduct studies to recover soil productivity.

Fishermen were given new boats and introduced to other livelihood programs.

The Army's Southern Luzon Command introduced a charcoal briquette-making project, using forest waste products.

Tirona said the prelature's Basic Christian Communities were coordinating the construction of 400 housing units in Barangay Agos-Agos in Infanta to be given to the flood victims. He said the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines-National Secretariat for Social Action and several European countries donated funds for the housing project.

Thousands of expatriates from northern Quezon donated relief goods through the Internet website (www.infanta.org). Mila Glodava, founder and president of the US-based Metro Infanta Foundation, posted the relief and donations call.

Remembrance

Infanta remembered that night of Nov. 29 with the community holding the traditional "*babang luksa*" (end of mourning) with prayers and candle lighting.

Bands from different schools led the parade that went around the town.

"We also celebrate the heroism of those who offered their lives so that others may live, like our own Father Chat," Tirona said.

A memorial of concrete cross for Fr. Charlito "Chat" Colendres is being erected in a corner of the church compound in Infanta. The priest died while trying to save some parishioners at the height of the flash floods.

During the commemoration program, the plaza teemed with guests led by Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Joel Virador, and provincial and local officials.

In General Nakar, Mayor Hernando Avellaneda led the commemoration program in the parish of Po Ana and Saint Joaquin.

Students from Sining Daluyan of the Mount Carmel High School relived in a short play the moments of fear and anxiety during that fateful night last year.

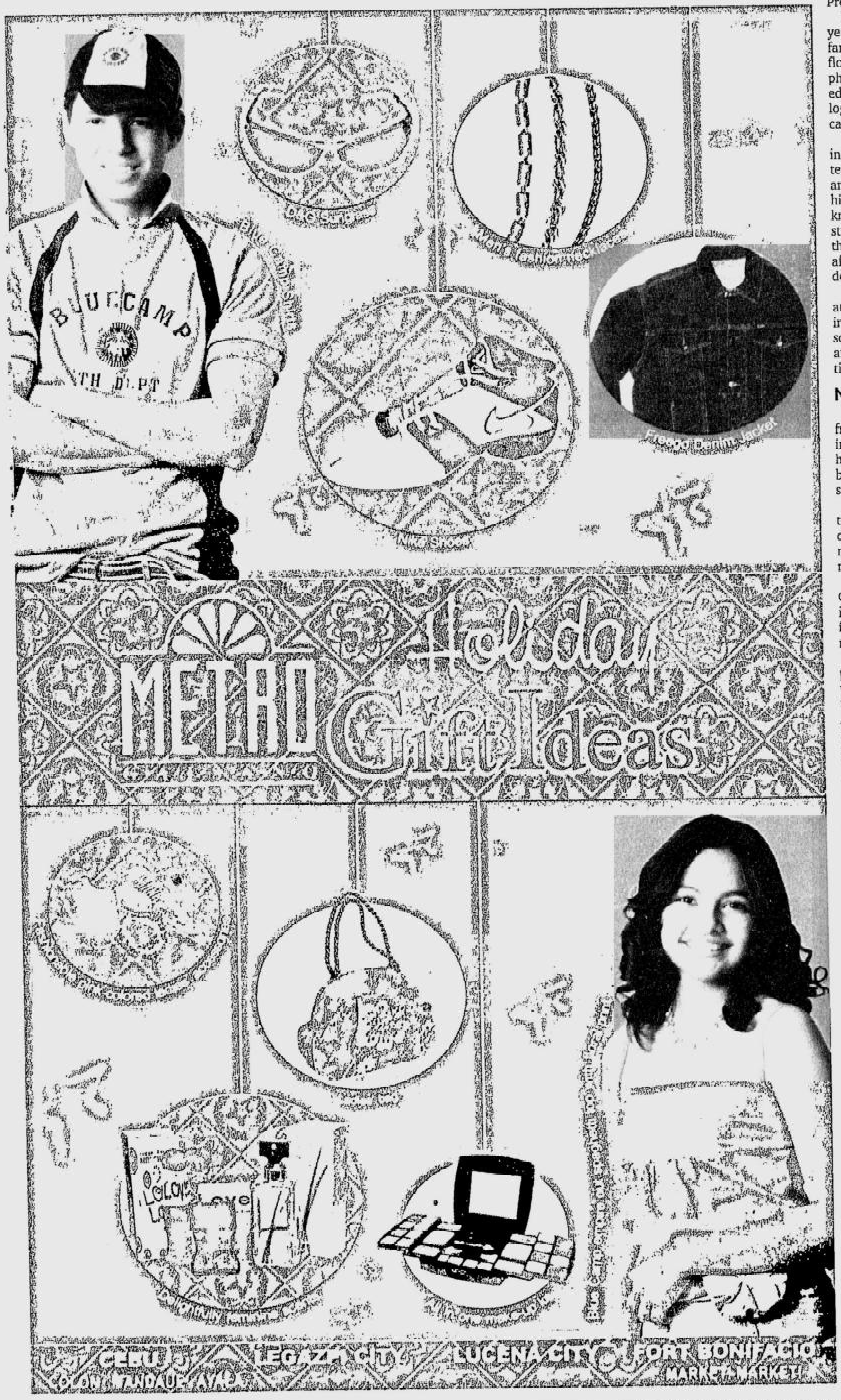
Jonathan Saynes, a faculty member and trainer of Sining Daluyan, said most of the participants portrayed real-life experiences.

He said he formed the theater group soon after the tragedy to serve as an outlet to grieving students.

Lighted candles and flowers adorned the soil marked with wooden crosses that bore the names of the dead.

Church leaders and local officials said that despite all these developments, lots of work needed to be done, including the rehabilitation of the Agos River, lending continuity to livelihood programs, and an end to logging activities.

LANI Trasmaño offers prayers to the makeshift graves of her parents and sister at the back of their house in Barangay Tignoan, Real, Quezon.



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Homes at last for Christmas

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THE MALABON GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN its first step in addressing the growing problem of informal settlers in the city with a most timely gift for the holidays.

Around 2,000 residents would be directly affected by relocation projects set up by the local government for those who have no homes of their own.

Already, 100 families living along Yanga St. in Barangay Maysilo are looking forward to owning the land where their shanties had been standing on for decades.

The local government had announced that a list of beneficiaries for its other housing projects is now being completed.

"Informal settlers are advised to register with the mayor's office for inclusion in the list being drawn for other resettlement programs in Norzagaray and San Francisco del Monte, Bulacan," Mayor Canuto Oreta said.

The mayor said all applicants must be screened properly to give a fair chance to deserving but poor residents who have been living in the city for some time now, he added.

Informal settlers have sprouted in the city in recent years, with some of them even building their shanties in the middle of the streets leading to city hall.

"It is one of the city's problems that must be addressed soon despite the lack of funds," the mayor added.

But applicants must first meet the requirements set by the National Housing Authority in order to qualify.

Oreta said beneficiaries of the project must also have the means to pay for the monthly amortization for the house and lot, which is "very minimal."

The local government would help in providing basic utilities like water and electricity for the new tenants, the mayor added.

Cuckoos at the PNP

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

ANY WACKO, WEIRDO and cuckoo can become a cop because the Philippine National Police (PNP) is very lax in accepting applicants.

An example of a cuckoo cop is PO1 Dennis Cortez Jr. of Floridablanca, Pampanga, who poured gasoline on his body and threatened to set himself on fire when a government demolition team came to tear down structures that included his store.

The court had ordered the structures torn down because they were encroaching on the San Antonio-Floridablanca Road.

The rookie Cortez, in full uniform, held the wrecking crew at bay for three hours as he threatened to burn himself.

He was finally appeased, arrested and put in jail.

There are hundreds of Cortezes in the PNP. You read about them in the papers or see them on the TV news every day. They oppress or abuse the very people they are sworn to serve and protect.

Proof? In my public service program, "Isumbong mo kay Tulfo," seven out of 10 people who seek redress from grievances every day from Monday to Friday complain against policemen. Most of the objects of their complaints are cops who are new in the service.

How do cops like Cortez get into the service when they were supposed to have undergone a neuro-psychiatric test? Results of the neuro test would have shown how a police applicant would behave when he is already wearing the badge and carrying a gun.

But in the PNP, it seems, the neuro test is just pro forma or one that can be waived.

Why? Because when a police applicant fails the neuro test he goes to his politician-backer who pressures the PNP higher-ups into accepting his protégé.

In some instances, some people at the personnel division office at Camp Crame include the names of the neuro flunkers in the list of those who will undergo training. Of course, the flunkers paid off their contacts at the personnel division office.

* * *

Why are the President's men not obeying her orders?

In July, this year, President Macapagal-Arroyo signed an order assigning Grace Zuno-Caringal to the Cebu port customs office as its chief collector.

But until now, her order has yet to be carried out by the higher-ups at the Department of Finance and the Bureau of Customs.

Lourdes Mangawang, whom Caringal was supposed to have replaced, is still holding on to her post.

Mangawang was placed in that position by former Customs Commissioner Bert Lina upon the recommendation of Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno. Both Lina and Parayno resigned their posts at the height of the "Hello Garci" controversy.

In a short time after taking over the lucrative customs post, Mangawang has become very unpopular with the local media because of rampant corruption at the Cebu customs.

Probably because of rampant corruption, revenue collections by the Cebu customs have dropped at an all-time low.

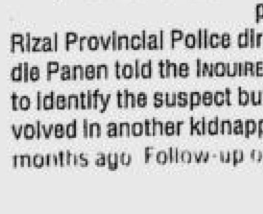
A member of the Cebu media has given me photos of the houses Mangawang has reportedly built or renovated at the Jestra Villas and the BF Executive Village in Parañaque City months after she became Cebu customs collector.

METROBRIEFS

Wycoco still comatose

A MASS was held yesterday for National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Director Reynaldo Wycoco who remains in a deep coma two weeks after he suffered a stroke due to a ruptured aneurysm. NBI officials and employees attended the Mass which was held at the bureau's chapel to pray for his immediate recovery. "There has been no significant change from before (in Wycoco's condition)," said his attending physician, Manila Doctors Hospital (MDH) medical director and cardiologist Dr. Dante Morales who also reported that the patient's heart rate and blood pressure, as of now, remain stable. "At this point, we are giving all he needs to maintain support of the body organs and stability of the vital signs," the doctor said although he stressed that "only time will tell" if Wycoco's vital organs would be able to function without support. "After having supported his organs, we could only hope and pray for the best. As long as there is life, there is a ray of hope," Morales said. *Tina G. Santos*

Kidnap suspect identified



POLICE have already identified one of the three suspects who managed to escape after the foiled kidnapping of a Filipino-Chinese businesswoman on Sunday. "Our witnesses managed to identify one of the three suspects from a police photo gallery," Rizal Provincial Police director Senior Supt. Freddie Panen told the INQUIRER yesterday. He refused to identify the suspect but said the man was involved in another kidnapping in Bulacan two months ago. Follow-up operations are ongoing to arrest the suspect with police teams deployed to provinces outside Luzon to track him down, Panen added. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

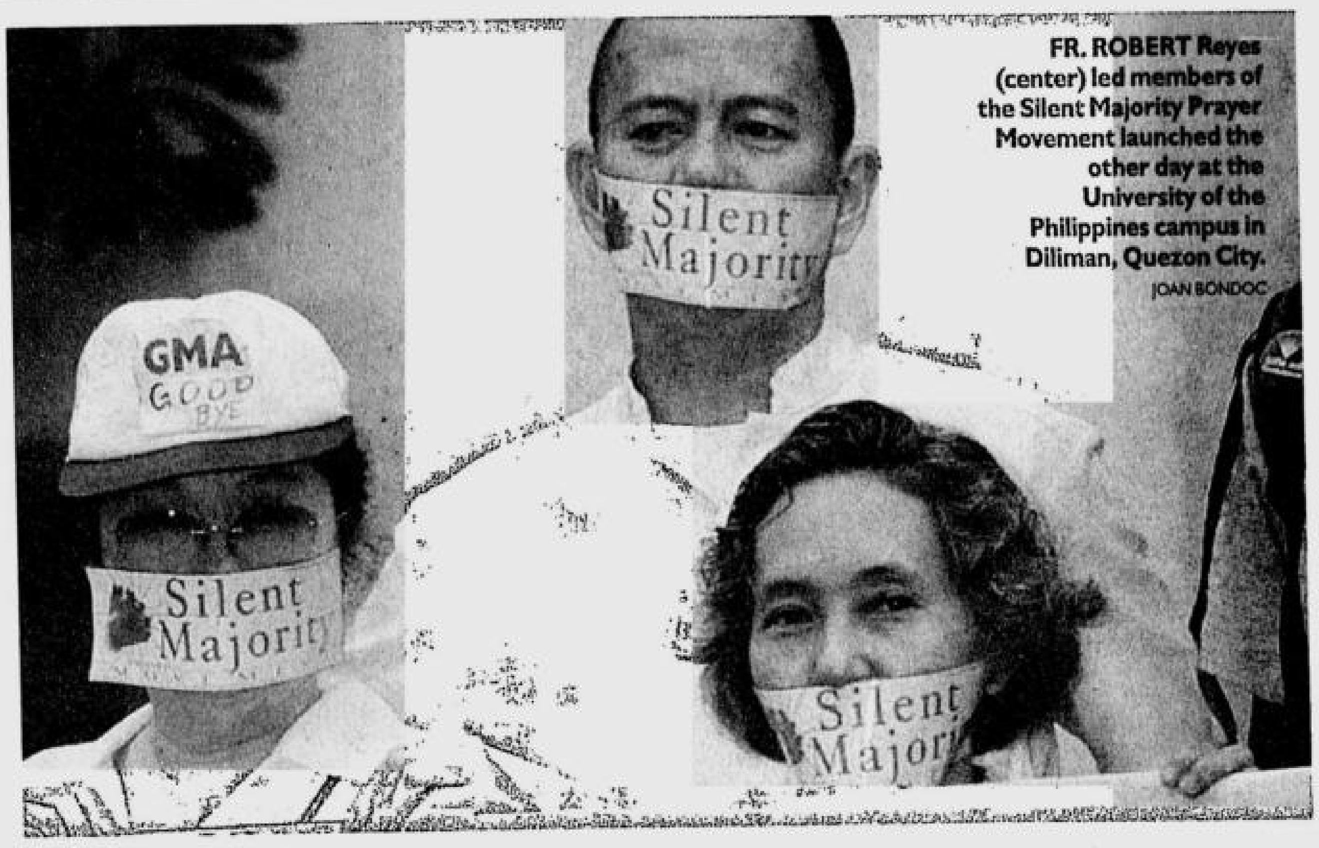
Roldan's holiday wish

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS...

FORMER congressman and actor Dennis Roldan, who is detained at the Pasig City Jail on kidnap-for-ransom charges, is keeping his fingers crossed he will be allowed to go home for Christmas. Roldan filed more than three months ago an application for bail, saying the evidence against him was weak. His lawyer Siegfrid Fortun said the other day they were hoping Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 261 Judge Agnes Carpio would approve his application "before Christmas." Roldan and six others are accused of kidnapping a 3-year-old Filipino-Chinese boy in February and demanding a ransom of P250 million. But the prosecution remains confident the testimonies of the nine witnesses they had presented so far, some of whom directly linked the actor to the kidnapping, were enough to block the application. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

P12.5M hot goods seized

The Bureau of Customs yesterday announced the seizure of P12.5 million worth of contraband items, including P7 million worth of rice, at the Port of Manila amid fears that smugglers might intensify their activities with the onset of the holidays. The confiscated sacks of rice came from Hong Kong aboard the M/V Wan Hai and had been misdeclared as plastic packing machines, according to BOC Commissioner Alexander Arevalo. *Leila B. Salaverria*



FR. ROBERT Reyes (center) led members of the Silent Majority Prayer Movement launched the other day at the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

Say a little prayer, says Fr. Robert

By DJ Yap

"RUNNING PRIEST" FR. ROBERT Reyes has come full circle.

He has joined rallies on Mendiola, fasted at the People Power Monument, jogged in school campuses, "exorcised" the House of Representatives, and invoked ghosts to haunt President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Now, this man of the cloth is returning to the power of prayer.

Reyes formed the "Silent Majority Prayer Movement" to unify apathetic Filipinos against Ms Arroyo, whose administration has been rocked by allegations of electoral fraud, through a simple prayer.

It goes: "Oh God, bless this nation in crisis. Heal our country's wounds. Unite the Silent Majority who long for truth, justice and peace. Grant us the power and wisdom to fight for the common welfare. Help us seal the door where evil dwells. May light, love and grace restore God's plan for us."

At the launch of the prayer movement at the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City the other day, the outspoken priest said the government should expect more noise from the "silent but seething majority" in the coming days, particularly with the surfacing of former election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

"Not too many people are marching in the streets, but surveys have shown that a majority of them no longer want Ms Arroyo," Reyes said. The opposition, he added, "has tried everything, including rallies, gimmicks on the streets, but none of these worked." But the silent majority can make their voices be heard through a simple prayer, he added. "Now is the time to test the power of prayer."

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• R. Macaraig, Parañaque City - I am thanking Mama Mary for all the blessings, she's giving our family. I am specially happy, she granted my wish for my niece & my brother-in-law. My niece was accepted as resident pathologist in New York while his father was recently promoted in post in Korea. Aside from these, I primally received lots of favors and blessings from her. I really feel that she's always there for me whenever I needed her. Again, many thanks to our dearest Mother Mama Mary.

• Ms. D. Ching, Late last year - I experienced pain on my left neck down to my shoulder. The pain was too much, I had a hard time turning around. I tried different kinds of pain relievers but to no avail. One Sunday, I chanced upon an article regarding Our Lady of Lourdes immersed in Holy Water. I decided to order so to experience a miracle. When the Lourdes was delivered to me, I rubbed it to my neck and asked Mama Mary to help heal me. I did it continously for several days, and before I knew it the pain was gone. I indeed experienced the healing touch of Mama Mary. I'm really thankful to have ordered the Our Lady of Lourdes Immersed in Holy Water.

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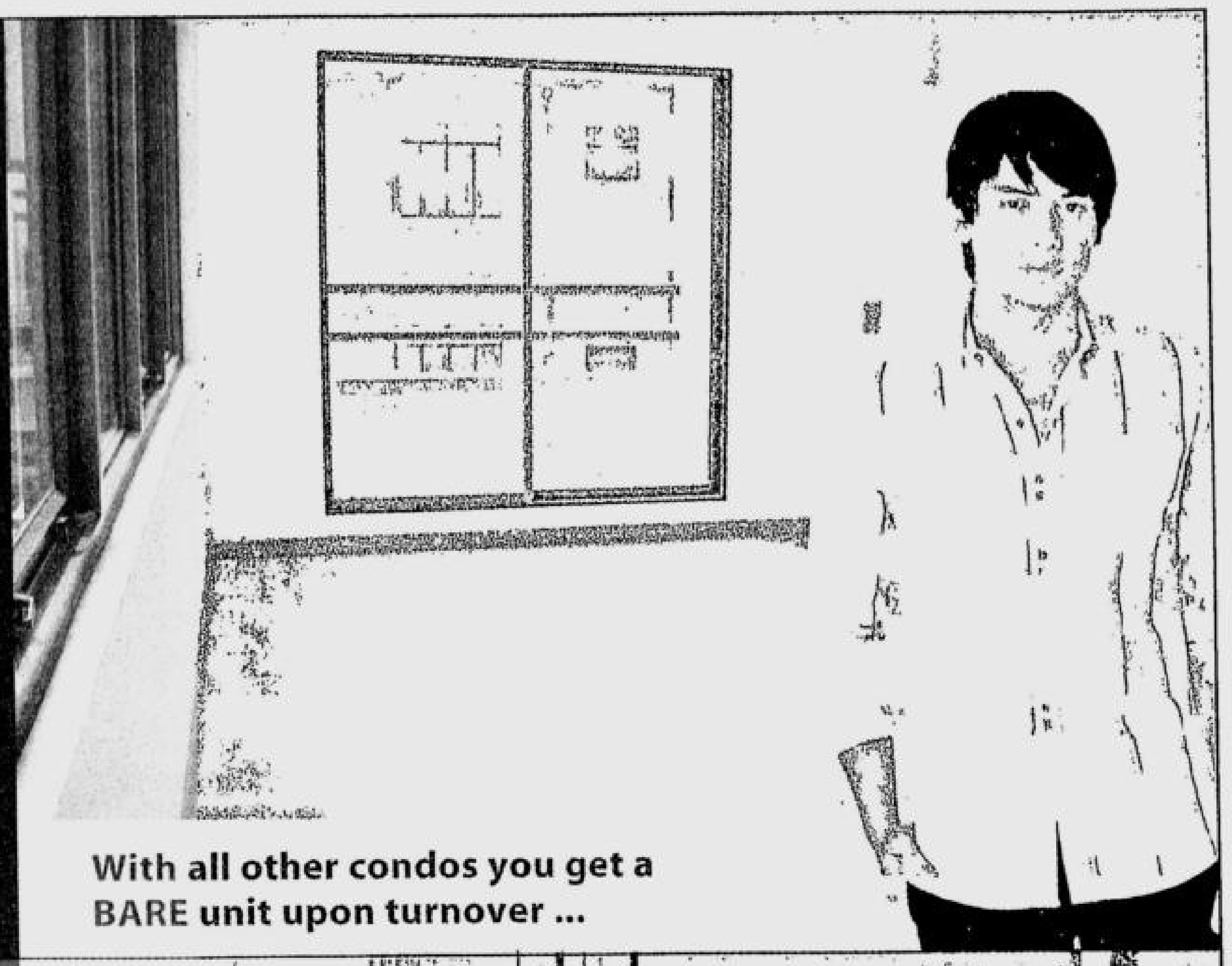

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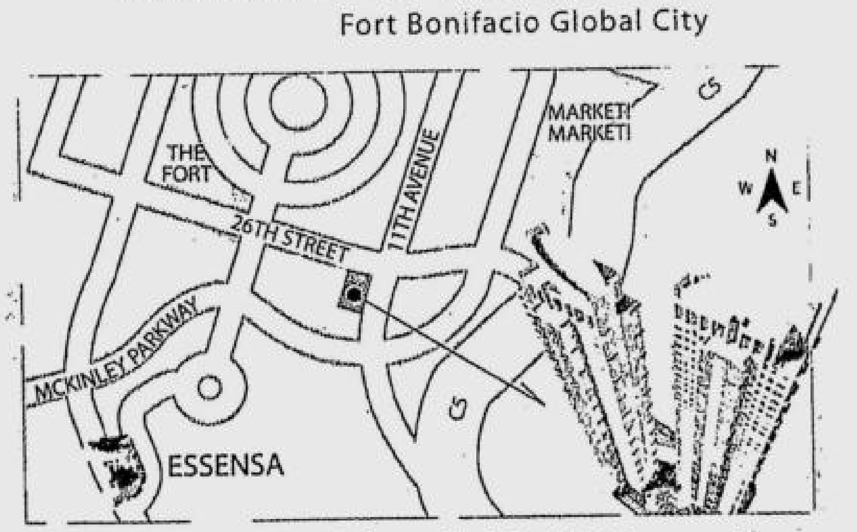
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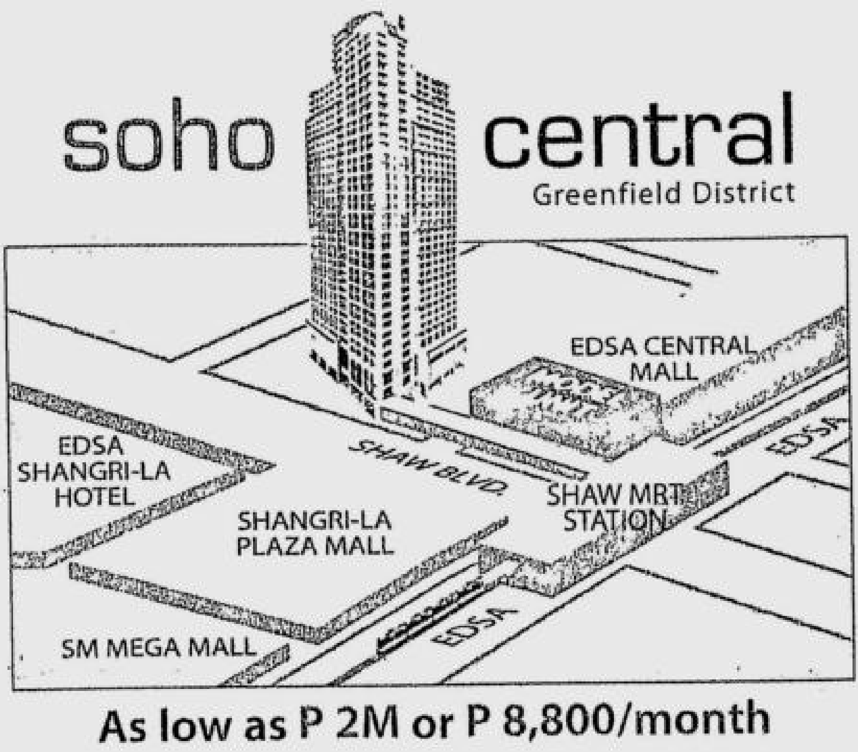
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Dream tiffs today; Chot vs Yeng up

GAMES TODAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4 p.m.—Ateneo Legends vs La Salle Legends
6 p.m.—All Star pros-varsity

THE RESULT IS ALWAYS UNPREDICTABLE when these old rivals meet.

And meet again they will as the country's most intense collegiate squads battle in a twinbill of games today in the Ateneo-La Salle Dream Games '05 at the Big Dome.

Former basketball greats from the 1960s to the 1980s clash in the Legends game at 4 p.m., while PBA players and current varsity members from each side collide in an All Star pros-varsity match at 6 p.m.

The main fare will also feature the battle between two of the pro league's finest bench tacticians in Ateneo's Chot Reyes and La Salle's Yeng Guiao.

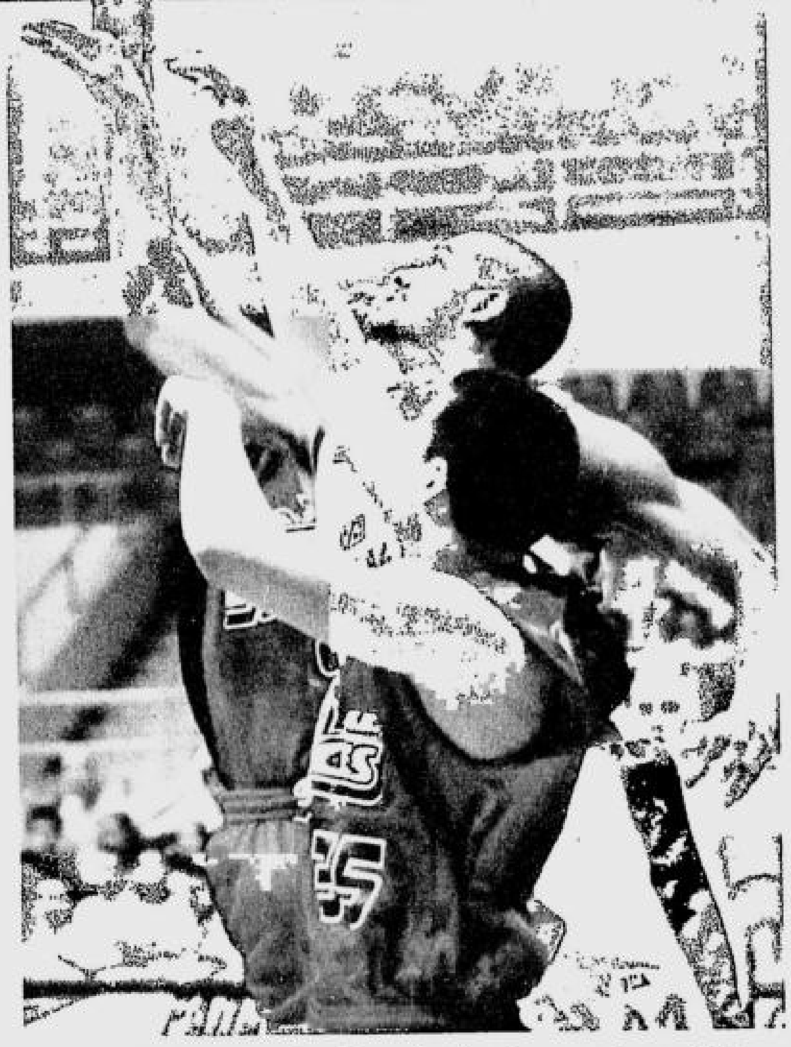
The Ateneo camp will banner 2005 PBA Rookie of the Year Rich Alvarez together with his 2002 UAAP championship teammates Enrico Villanueva, Wesley Gonzales, Larry Fonacier, Paolo Bugia and Jec Chia.

Joining them are veterans Olsen Racela and Vince Hizon, along with current Blue Eagles LA Tenorio, JC Intal, Japeth Aguilar and Doug Kramer.

La Salle's pro roster, meanwhile, is studded with the stars of the 1998-2001 and 2004 UAAP championship runs. Providing support for seasoned cager Jun Limpot are young guns Ren Ren Ritualo, Mike Cortez, Mac Cardona, Don Allado, Mark Telan, Mac Cuan and Willie Wilson.

Representing the current generation of Green Archers are Joseph Yeo, Rico Maierhofer, Junjun Cabatu and Ryan Araña.

"With the basketball stars of the past 40 years playing in both games, these will be a classic," said Bobong Velez, who organized the dream matches. *Jasmine W. Payo*


STA. LUCIA import Damien Owens battles for possession against Alaska's Tony dela Cruz (foreground) and Sonny Thoss. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Aces end slide minus import

GAMES TOMORROW (*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—Sta. Lucia Realty vs Red Bull Barako
7:25 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Coca-Cola

By June Navarro

ANTIPOLO CITY—ALASKA SEEMS BETTER off without Tee McClary.

The Aces rediscovered their chemistry to post an 87-82 victory over the Sta. Lucia Realtors at the resumption of the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference last night at the Ynares Center.

Brandon Cablay poured 10 of his 16 points in the final half while Mike Cortez essayed his quarterback role with vigor as the Aces held their ground even without an import.

The Aces dumped McClary a week ago after dropping their last five games. Victor Thomas was brought in to replace McClary but the former Red Bull Barako import failed to meet the maximum 6-foot-6 height limit for reinforcements.

"When I heard that Vic (Thomas) didn't make it, I went ballistic," said Alaska coach Tim Cone. "He was awesome and we're so cocky coming into this game."

By snapping a five-game slide, the Aces improved to 6-7 while the Realtors, who brandished a new import in Damien Owens, dropped to their eighth defeat in 13 games.

Owens, who spearheaded the Realtors to their first-ever and only PBA crown in the 2001 Governors Cup, debuted with 19 points and 15 rebounds but bungled his last three crucial attempts from the field.

In the second game, Talk 'N Text snapped out of a three-game losing spell, downing Purefoods, 93-89, in overtime.

The scores:

First Game

ALASKA 87—Cariaso 17, Cablay 16, Cortez 14, Dela Cruz 12, Thoss 10, Allado 7, Alvarez 6, Hugnatan 5, Wilson 0.

STA. LUCIA 82—Owens 19, Mendoza 14, Espino 13, Cabagnot 10, Calimag 9, Duremdes 6, Aquino 6, Catli 3, Omolon 2, Tolomia 0.

Quarters: 19-30, 47-46, 68-62, 87-82.

President offers new battle cry for Pinoy Olympic hopefuls

By Marc Anthony Reyes

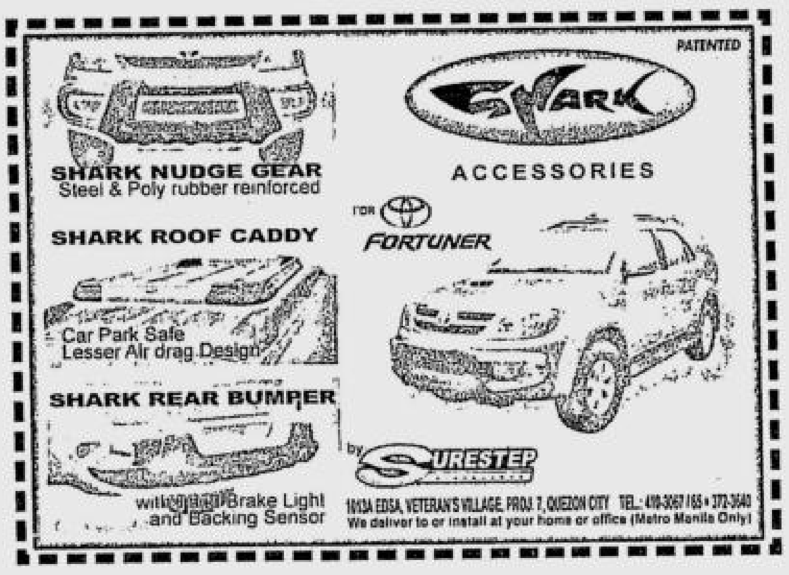
PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO YESTERDAY HAILED the national athletes who steered the country to its first ever Southeast Asian Games overall championship and then offered them a new battle cry to work on.

"We can now say, 'Beijing, here we come,'" said Mrs Arroyo, who donned the white RP Team jacket on top of her red shirt and denim pants. She arrived at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium 30 minutes after First Gentleman Mike Arroyo came in.

In a five-minute speech before 800 or so athletes, the Chief Executive said the Philippines is now ready to take a crack at its first-ever Olympic gold medal in the 2008 Beijing Games.

She said the "fighting spirit, and solidarity of the Filipino people" spelled the country's success in the Games, where the Philippines amassed 113 gold 86 silver and 91 bronze medals in the just-concluded regional Games.

A ticker tape parade was earlier held for the athletes around key cities of Metro Manila.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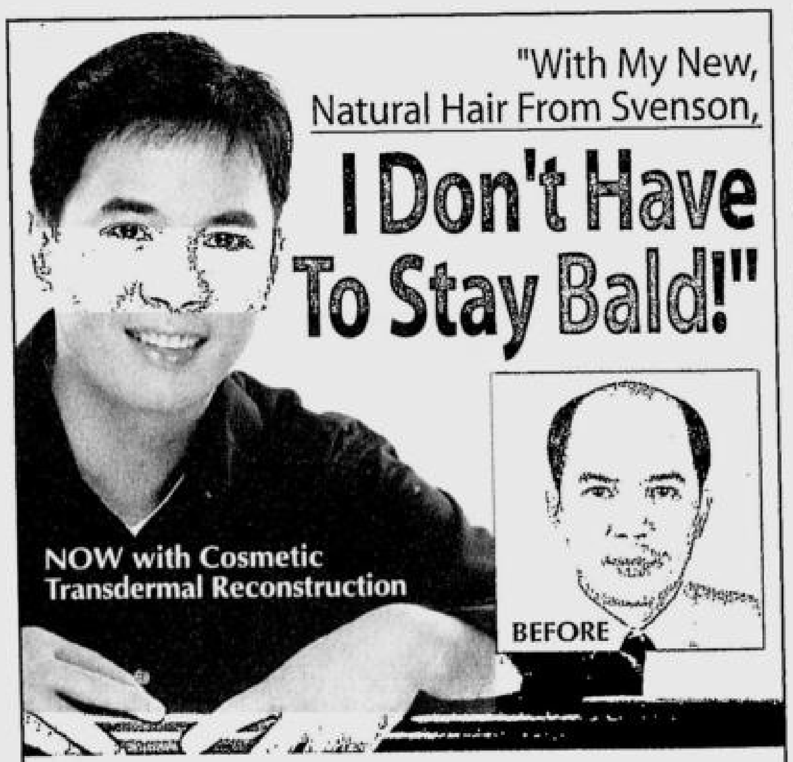
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Nike shows way in Fil-Am battles

By Musong R. Castillo

BAGUIO CITY—JAY BAYRON AND BOYET Saragoza shot identical 3-under-par cards worth 39 points in separate courses to power two favored Nike squads to the lead at the start yesterday of the 56th Fil-Am Invitational golf's championship divisions here.

Bayron fired the equivalent of 58 at the Baguio Country Club course, and Juvic Pagunsan backed him with 37 points, or 60 in medal play, as Nike erected a 14-point lead over Southwoods in the Fil Championship on a first-round total of 139.

Over at Camp John Hay, Saragoza, the pint-sized long-hitter from Davao, fired the equivalent of 66 for that 39 and veteran Dave Hernandez was steady with a level 69 for 36 points as Nike, aiming for a title repeat in both divisions, pooled 144, just three points in front of Southwoods.

"I putted well considering how hard the greens were," said Bayron, who shot nines of 30-28.

Mario Labajo, one of five products of the National Caddies' Open program in the tournament, added 34 points and former RP Amateur champ Jun Bernis contributed 29 to round out Nike scoring in the Fil division.

Erwin Vinluan, Anthony Fernando and Mico Yee carded identical 32s for Southwoods in the Fil division, with Tonlits Asistio struggling to a seven-over 68 worth 29 points for the fourth and last score to count.

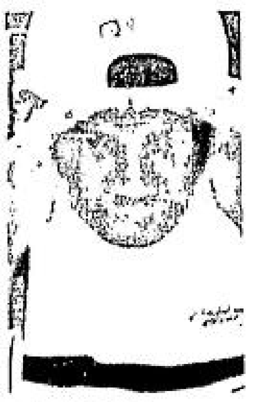
Del Monte was third after a 118-point total built around Buboy Jaraula's 33, while Mizuno-DHL, led by Korean Kim Chang-hoi's 31, and Eastridge Golf Club, occupied the next two Fil places with 115 and 96 points, respectively.

Ronnie Torrecampo (35) and Jessie Balasbas (34) were the other scorers for Nike's Am team.

Royal Caribbean tallied 137 and Mizuno-DHL 115 to be in third and fourth places in Am play.

A tight race looms in the Am side after Hanson So Jr. scored a 37, Jun Jun Plana a 36, Mico Alejandro a 35 and RP team member Michael Bibat a 33 for Southwoods' second-running 141.

BAYRON



SARAGOZA

Bibat is seeing action in the lower division after his index dropped.

"I will try to ask for a revision in the rules next year, which will allow teams to name their players and not be bound by indices," Southwoods captain Jeric Hechanova told the INQUIRER.

Meanwhile, Pugad Lawin drew a 23 from Chito Cruz for a 77 total for the day to wrest the Am Flight B lead with a 250 with just 18 holes left to play.

Guam Kool Swingers also moved up in the standings after an 80 yesterday and a 246 total, two points ahead of overnight leader Crystal Dew Matikas. Henry Leon Guerrero shot an 80 to lead Guam Kool Swingers while Wilson Amper submitted a 19 for Crystal Dew.

Wizards picked to score No.6

STREAKING MAGNOLIA Dairy Ice Cream tries to strengthen its lead when it battles Far Eastern Insurance as the 2006 PBL Heroes Cup resumes today after taking an 11-day break to give way to the country's staging of the 23rd SEA Games.

The Wizards will take a five-game winning run into their match against the Insurers at 4 p.m. at the JCSGO gym in Cubao.

Granny Goose Tortillos and Rain or Shine, sporting similar 3-2 win-loss records, part ways at 2 p.m.

Their confidence boosted by a masterful 71-66 victory over the Snackmasters last Nov. 20 at the San Sebastian gym in Cavite, the Insurers are expected to give the Wizards a strong challenge.

Coach Bong dela Cruz will again lean on Michael Bravo, Niño Marquez and Jay Sierra, the troika that triggered the blazing windup to turn back the Snackmasters.

The Insurers, however, need to double their efforts to have a fair chance of beating the taller and heftier Wizards.

Arwind Santos, who is eyeing a second MVP plum, is expected to carry the scoring load for the Wizards with the versatile Kelly Williams out to show his worth for the team anew.

STANDINGS	W	L
Magnolia	5	0
R. or Shine	3	2
G. Goose	3	2
Montaña	3	3
Hapee	3	3
Harbour	2	4
Toyota Otis	2	4
Far Eastern	1	4

GAMES TODAY (*JCSGO Gym, Cubao*)

2 p.m.—Granny Goose vs Rain or Shine

4 p.m.—Magnolia vs Far Eastern Insurance

How the SEAG was won

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

BAGUIO CITY—AS I WAS SAYING, OUR smashing victory in the 23rd SEA Games was simply the result of teamwork.

Not rigging, not cheating, contrary to what way-out-of-line Premier Thaksin of Thailand had said (even King Bhumibol of Thailand had almost scolded Thaksin for those irresponsible remarks).

But forget about Thaksin. Let's focus on the elements of teamwork.

First and foremost, our athletes sacrificed the most. They skipped going to the mall, stopped watching the movies and avoided parties—including those intimate family reunions. It can also be said that even dates with the sweethearts had to be cancelled. The married ones endured nights without the warm hugs of their better halves, restrained themselves in not being able to romp with their kids for days on end. Virtually all their waking hours in the run-up to the Games, they put to good use by practicing even beyond the prescribed hours for practice. I salute their parents, their guardians, for the equal sacrifice they had to share with their loved ones—the athletes. If the athlete had left his/her picture to his parents before leaving home, he'd be justified. The son's picture, the daughter's photo, would be all the mother had during the months that he/she was away undergoing training.

Indeed, to be an athlete spells the supreme sacrifice one non-combatant can offer to prove one's love to country.

Not a single second wasted.

Not a single minute thrown away.

Not a single hour overlooked.

Not a single day without practice.

To a determined athlete, the word burnout doesn't exist.

To a determined athlete, the world is a stage for excellence.

They were rewarded. Thus, if we say our overall victory is theirs and theirs alone, nothing wrong there, I guess. We are but only sharers of their dreams. To applaud them would be much welcomed. But to venerate them, to put them in a pedestal, to extend them something for their future would be the apex of showing our gratitude to their efforts in putting the Filipino in the world sporting map. If our politicians would only enact a law to ensure a financially-rewarding future for them, that'd really be their gold medal.

Didn't I say teamwork did it?

OK, the government helped in many ways. There will never be any success in any international competition without government aid. In her little, if not quiet way, GMA threw her support behind our athletes. You have to give it to her. Her "godfather" scheme really did wonders.

And what was the "godfather" scheme again?

Well, GMA had asked for support from the private sector. Almost instantly, a lot of them responded. Among them, ICTSI's Ricky Razon, who quietly dug up from his pocket to spend millions to ensure a trouble-free training for our golfers and staging of the golf competitions at the The Country Club in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. All the eight countries were profuse in praise of Ricky's monumental hosting of the event. I, myself, was impressed at the Media Center there—courtesy of Ricky, who provided all the computers, copiers, fax machines and internet facilities.

And, of course, last but not least were our sports officials, particularly our NSA presidents and their chief point-men. This time, I had to salute them for their united focus to win. Here's a glass to them, indeed.

Who said the Filipino is a lost race?

The Filipino can and will always deliver if asked to.

* * *

THANK YOU. First, I filed my Spectator column for Tuesday (Dec. 6) at the Baguio Country Club Business Center through BCC's general manager, Anthony de Leon. Yesterday, Camp John Hay executive Bong Vilches was gracious enough to have me use CJH's facilities to write this piece and e-mail it to the INQUIRER. Again, thank you very much, fellas. May your tribe increase!

* * *

FASTBREAK. If you plan to watch the 7th Universal Reality Combat Championship this Saturday at the Araneta Coliseum, buy your tickets now at TicketNet, all SM Department Stores and at the Big Dome. Presented by San Miguel Strong Ice and Solar Sports Entertainment, the event dubbed "The Art of War" has become the hottest sports topic in town since the conclusion of the 23rd SEA Games. Jed Dario is with Erwin Tieng, Alvin Aguilar and Franz Von Muhlfeld in staging the tournament that features four world-rated warriors from China.

* * *

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Ex-PBA vs Tribu in finals

ANTIPOLO CITY—THE EX-PBA STARS OF Rep. Vic Sumulong foiled an all-NBC finals in the Nature's Cup-Rep. Ronnie Puno Cup basketball tournament Tuesday by turning back Spring Cooking Oil, 84-67, in the semifinals at the City Auditorium here.

Henry Fernandez knocked in five of his six triples in the fourth quarter to erase Spring's 11-point (63-52) advantage.

It was a bitter loss for national shooter Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla's Cooking Oil Masters as they led throughout until Fernandez caught fire.

First NBC champion Tribu Sugbu arranged a title showdown with the ex-PBA Stars by subduing Homer Cagers, 88-76.

Christian Nicdao and Doroteo Almacin combined for 31 points to lead the Tribesmen of businessmen Lito Gillamac and Mario King in the tourney co-organized by Antipolo Basketball League and supported by Spring Cooking Oil and Sulpicio Lines.

Tribu and the VS Ex-PBA Stars will dispute the title at 3 p.m. today after Spring and Homer Cagers clash for third spot.

The scores:

TRIBU 88—Nicdao 17, Almacin 14, Butel 10, Cainglet 8, Sanz 6, Bucao 6, Huelar 6, Ducay 6, Sevilla 6, Yabut 3, Mercado 2, Calo 0, Santos 0.

HOMER 76—Legarde 15, Rodriguez 14, Mamaclay 12, Lopez 12, Zagala 12, Tropa 5, Cole 2, Ferrer 2, Galiza 0, Attunaga 0, Mopera 0, Baltazar 0, Jabar 0, Hernandez 0.

Quarters: 23-24, 46-42, 65-60, 88-76.

VS STARS 84—Fernandez 22, Pacheco 15, Regalado 15, Bolado 14, Reyes 6, Jarencio 6, Magtulis 4, Mendoza 2, Bognot 0, Victoria 0, Basco 0, Barbosa 0, Rodriguez 0, Ripalda 0.

SPRING 76—Hubalde 11, Capobres 11, Tiongco 10, Neo 10, Reyes 6, Kalaw 6, De Castro 5, Manuel 5, Caceres 5, Victolero 4, Inigo 3, Taguines 3, Barretto 0, Mallari 0, Corbin 0.

Quarters: 17-20, 33-37, 52-63, 84-76

CA now only bar to Lim deportation

By Leila B. Salaverria

A COURT ORDER IS THE ONLY THING that could keep beleaguered Basketball Association of the Philippines secretary general Graham Lim in the country.

Malacañang earlier dismissed Lim's motion for reconsideration on its decision to uphold his deportation for being an illegal alien.

The Bureau of Immigration is checking if Lim was able to obtain a court injunction against the decision, according to its Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr.

Lim would be deported within one week after the BI has made sure that he had failed to get a temporary restraining order from the Court of Appeals, the BI said.

"I issued instructions to check with the CA if Lim has been able to obtain a TRO," said Fernandez. "We will know the results within the week. I just want to make sure that we will not be hampered by technicalities when we enforce the deportation order."

SPORTSWATCH

Antonio rules int'l derby

SAGUPAAN COMPLEXOR 3000, A TOP RATED ENtry of *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio, emerged as champion in last week's "Cavite 7-Cock International Derby" at Cavite Coliseum Derby Center. Antonio received a giant trophy from the hosts led by former Sen. Ramon Revilla. "I strongly recommend to new breeders the proven and tested Sagupaan training and conditioning methods," said Antonio, who was also runner-up finisher (8.5 points) in the 856-entry Bakbakan 9-stag derby. Antonio will next compete in the 2006 GCAP Big Event derbies at San Juan Coliseum.

Makati hosts 80 fights today

BIGTIME COCKFIGHTING IS BACK AT THE FULLY air-conditioned Makati Coliseum today via the special 4-cock derby that will feature about 80 exciting fights. At stake is a guaranteed prize of P300,000. With Leo Magpantay and Batangas Cockers as hosts, today's entry fee is P10,000. The "Pamaskong Salpukan 6-cock derby" comes next on Dec. 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 26 and 28. This seven-day cockfest has a staggering guaranteed prize of P3 million plus a brand new Toyota Innova now on display at Makati Coliseum lobby. Entry fee is only P11,000. The derby, to be hosted by WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp., got a big boost recently with the confirmed participation of eight-cockers from Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. For more details, please call 896-3545 and 895-6475.

Roligon sets P4-M event

ROLIGON MEGA COCKPIT HAVE AGAIN CALLED ON Thunderbird Power Feeds for support as it celebrates its 16th year of successful operation with a P4 million special event. Supported by Thunderbird Platinum and Thunderbird Bexan-XP, Roligon's 16th Anniversary 6-Cock Derby is set Jan. 30 to Feb. 11, 2006. A P4 million total purse is up for grabs for a low entry fee of P11,000 and a minimum bet of P5,500. The champion who will post the fastest win based on the last fight will also drive home a brand new Toyota Innova 2.5J DSL M/T. The champion handler gets P200,000, while top gaffer receives P100,000. Participants may join in any of the four 2-cock eliminations. Call 851-2275, 833-1638, 852-9812 or text (0920) 950-9293.

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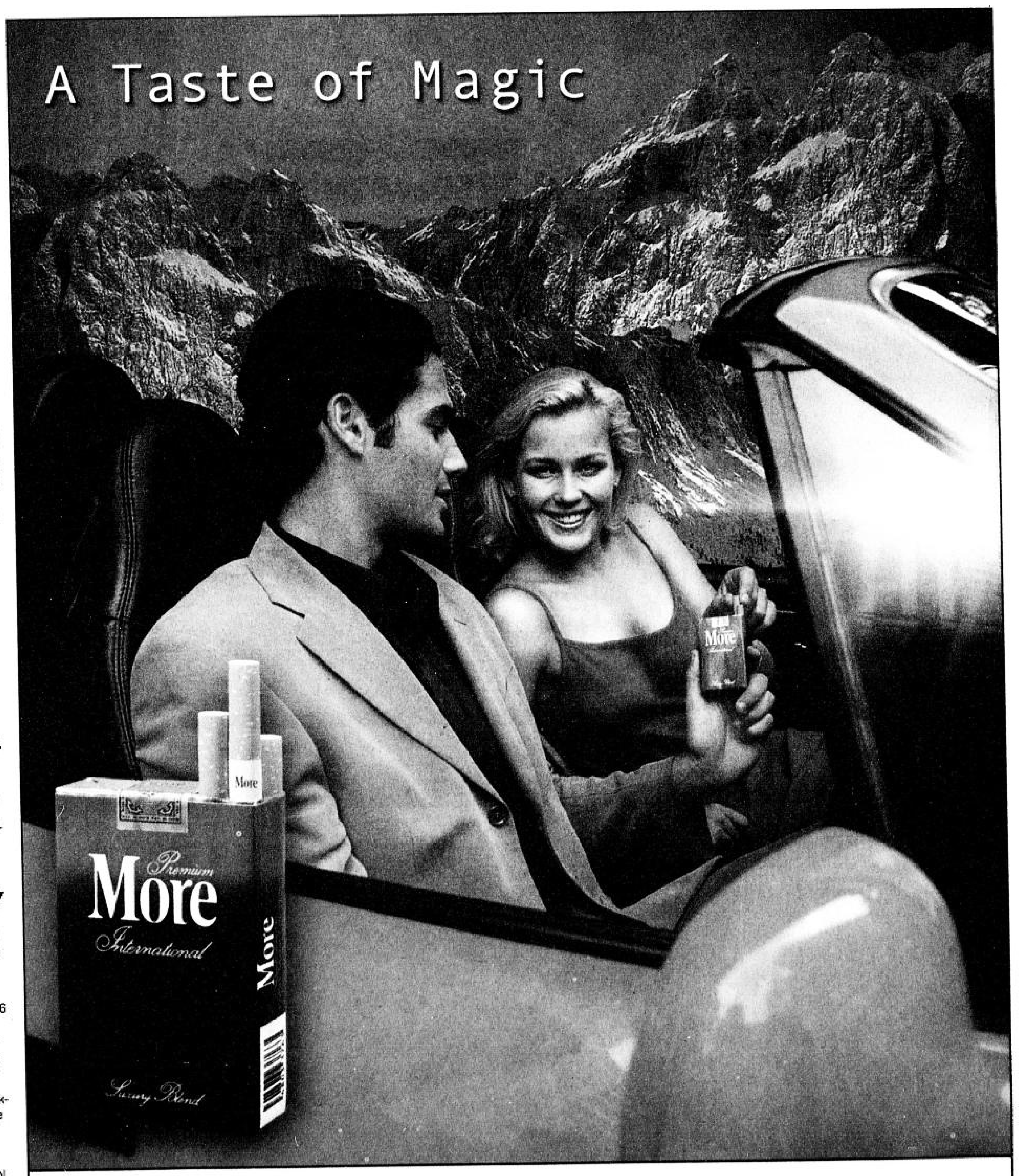

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SPORTS

Nowitzki tows Mavericks past Pacers

NOWITZKI: Crucial breakaway AP

INDIANAPOLIS—DIRK NOWITZKI HAD 31 points and 11 rebounds and the Dallas Mavericks pulled away in the closing minutes for an 84-75 victory over the Indiana Pacers in the NBA on Tuesday.

The Pacers, playing their first game at home after a five-game trip out west, cut a 14-point Dallas lead to 75-71 with under 4 minutes remaining.

But Adrian Griffin, Nowitzki and Marquis Daniels hit consecutive baskets for the Mavericks, and after a basket by Indiana's Ron Artest, Nowitzki put the game out of reach with a 3-pointer with 58 seconds remaining.

In other games, the Washington Wizards defeated the Toronto Raptors, 119-111, in overtime; The Los Angeles Lakers rapped the Milwaukee Bucks, 111-92; The Memphis Grizzlies whipped the New Orleans Hornets, 89-73; The Phoenix Suns crushed the Portland Trail Blazers, 130-85; The Houston Rockets torched the Boston Celtics, 91-73; the Denver Nuggets grounded the Atlanta Hawks, 125-116, the Cleveland Cavaliers subdued the Sacramento Kings, 102-97 and the New York Knicks tripped the Seattle SuperSonics 104-101. *AP*

NBA ON SOLAR: The Philadelphia 76ers against the Milwaukee Bucks today with Solar Sports airing the match starting at 8 a.m.

Passion

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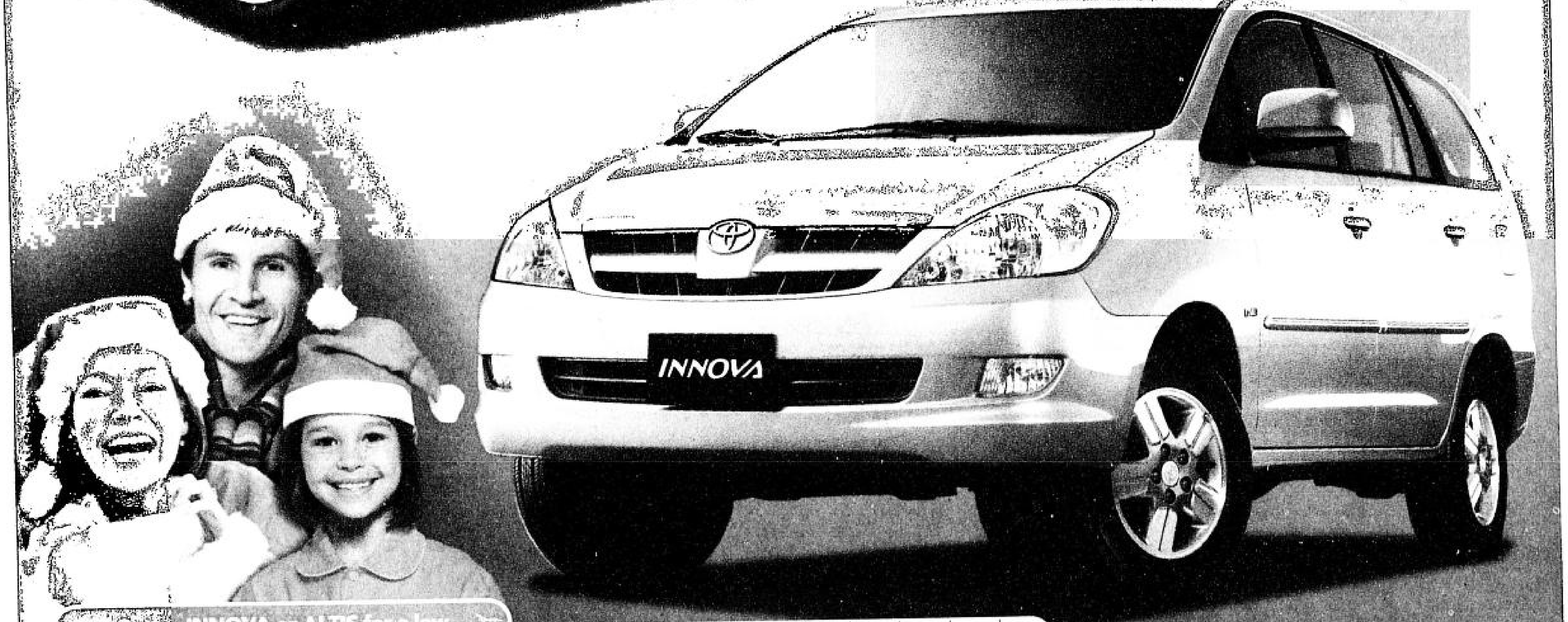
COROLLA ALTIS



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MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Altis 1.8 G A/T	939,000	100,000	72,052	49,617	39,545	28,219	22,770	19,658
Altis 1.8 E A/T	878,000	100,000	66,560	45,836	36,536	26,072	21,038	18,160
Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,539	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,094	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708,000	100,000	51,257	35,297	28,150	20,088	16,209	13,985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	82,039	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,468	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,910
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,653	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	885,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
Innova 2.0 J M/T	748,000	100,000	55,303	38,084	30,362	21,067	0	0

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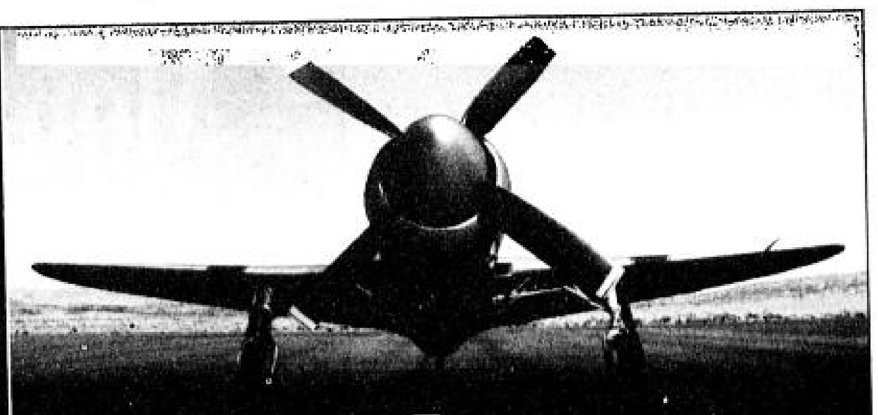

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That's entertainment!

Show business ... everything about it is appealing ... everything that traffic will allow

NOW SHOWING: "Inquirer Confidential," starring, from left, Kat Reyes, Jaycee Cruz, Bayani San Diego Jr., Emmie G. Velarde and Dolly Ann Carvajal; foreground, Guyito. PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN; GUYITO PHOTO BY RAFFY LERMA; DIGITAL IMAGING BY MARLONE RUBIO

By Emmie G. Velarde
Entertainment Editor

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Daily E-VAT

News. Analysis. Spice. Fun.

Our daily goal is to achieve this balance. The News requirement is fixed; Analysis, we have yet to find precious space for on a regular basis but we get it in there as often as possible. Spice, fortunately, is a built-in ingredient, given the shape of our slice of the editorial pie. Fun, ah, this is "value added touch" by the staff, our version of E-VAT as it were, impossible to source any other way. Readers may see it in the stars, those yellow ones sprinkled all over the section; a reward for the regulars is that they will find much more of this between the lines.

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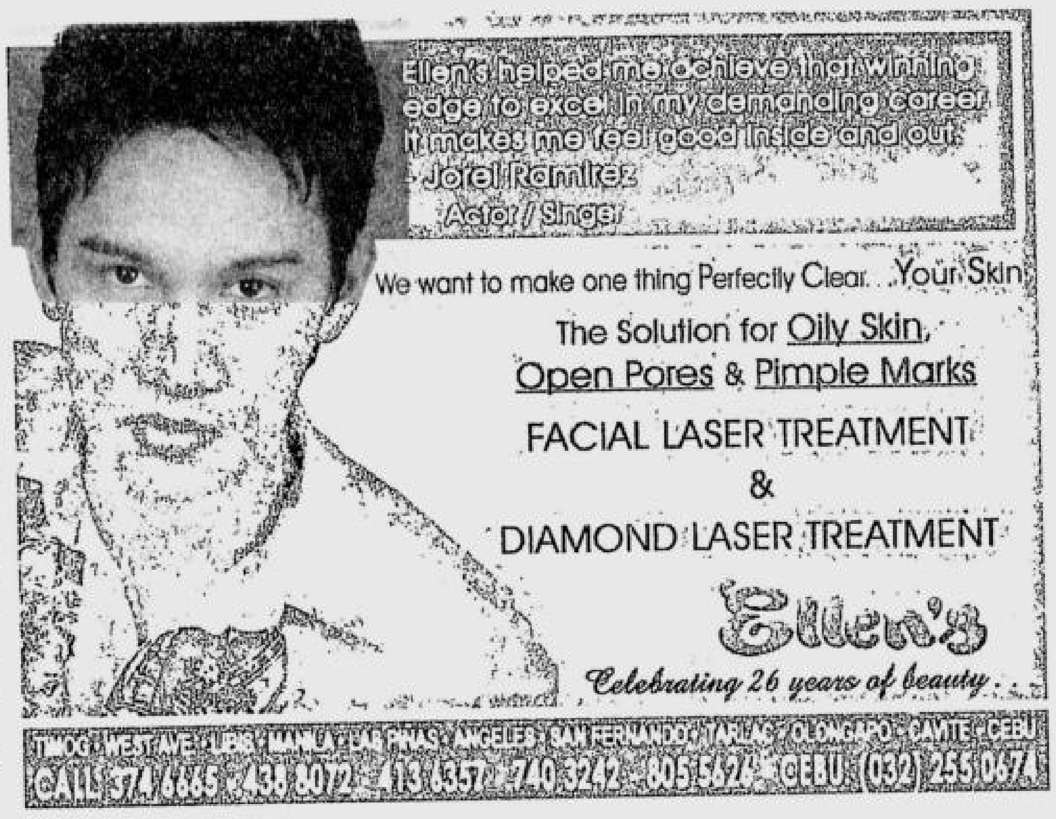

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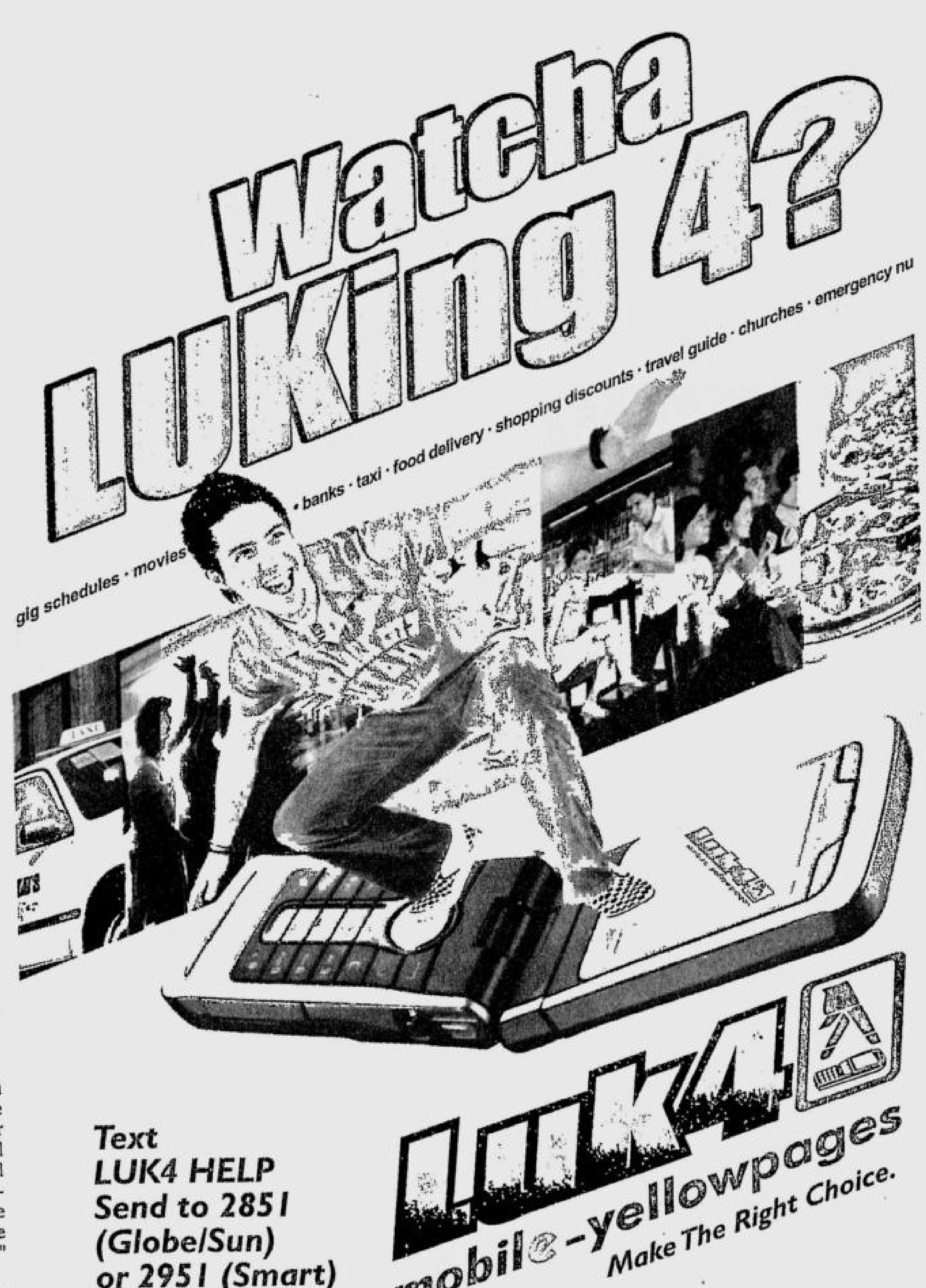

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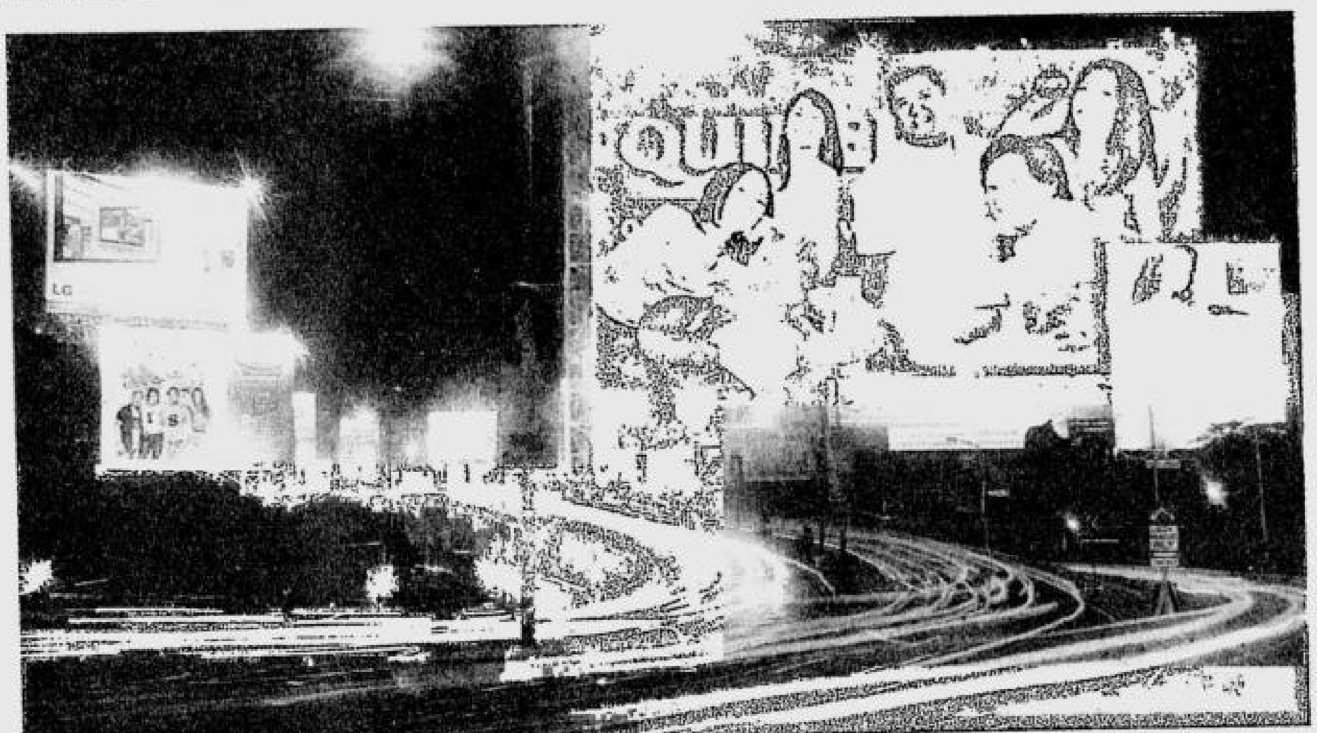

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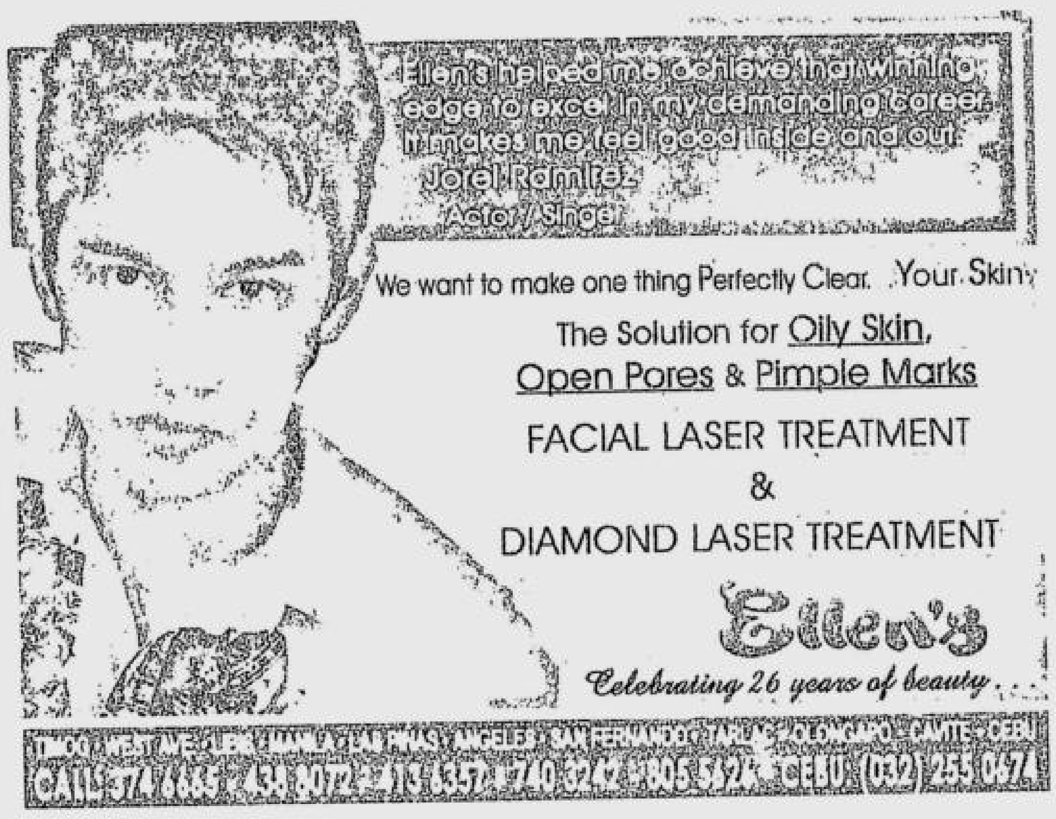
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Jorel Ramirez
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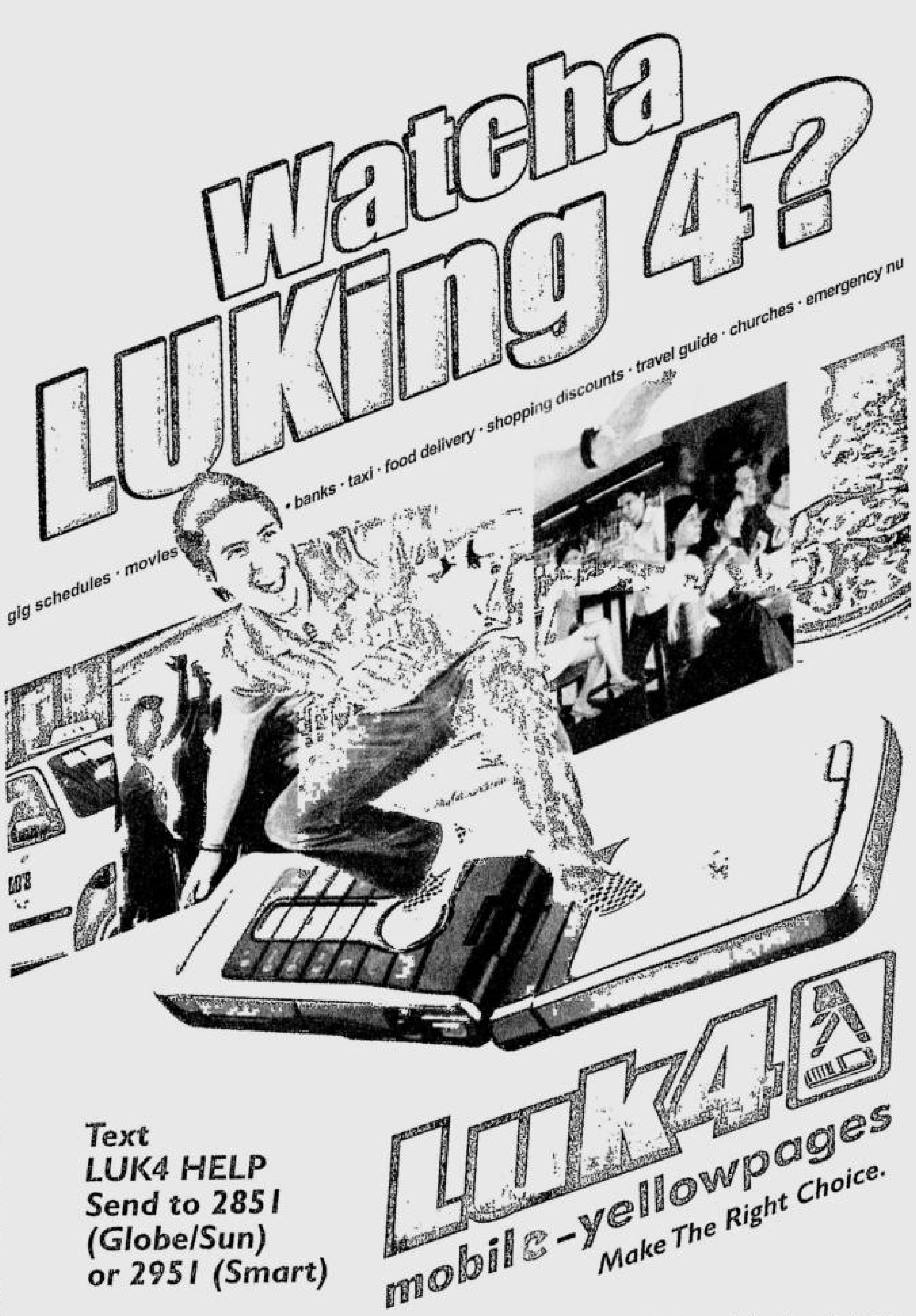
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The prime of Ms. Meryl Streep

ENTERTAINMENT
When RJ rocks Amadeus
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Life's Good at the CITY
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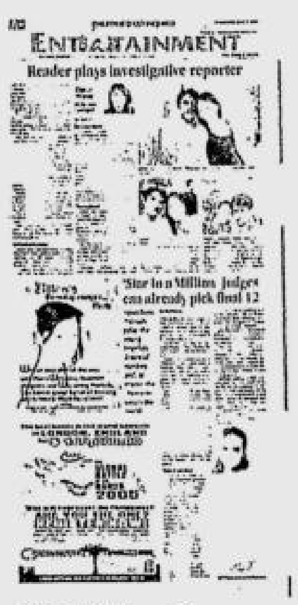
ENTERTAINMENT
Reader plays investigative reporter
Star in a Million judges can already pick final 12

ENTERTAINMENT
Welcome to Encantadia

ENTERTAINMENT
Darna!

You may have your own list. But here, in no particular order, are the INQUIRER Entertainment crew's 20 favorite stories this year.

CHEER FACTOR

- Scandal TV-Ad boycott. Big advertisers pull out of entertainment talk shows on television, following our series about what came to be known as "scandal TV." Better still, the concerned networks reiterate individual pledges of self-regulation. **By Bayani San Diego Jr. and Margie Quimpo-Espino, business features editor**
- Star Awards vote-buying scam and the subsequent probe. **By Marinel R. Cruz**
- LVN Pictures—signed, sealed, sold. **By Bayani San Diego Jr. and Clarissa S. Batino**
- Gov't radio (dwBR) balks at all-OPM (Original Pilipino Music) plan. **By Marinel R. Cruz**
- Celebrity visits. More and more stars are dropping by to chat with the staff, for instance, Fil-Aussie rocker MiG Ayesa, Ramon "RJ" Jacinto, Kuh Ledesma and Erik Santos.
- Dollywood scoops. Dolly Ann Carvajal reveals James Yap's "other girl," wonders how Kitchie Nadal "dumped" former band mates, announces that Bryan Revilla and Maui Taylor are dating. Plus, a reader writes a lengthy defense of Plinky Recto's ex-partner.
- Only IN Hollywood exclusives. Ruben Nepales, our man in LA, makes us green with envy over his own celebrity chitchats. To name only four of his illustrious subjects—Meryl Streep, Oprah Winfrey, Shirley MacLaine and Woody Allen. Then there's Ralph Fiennes, Daniel Radcliffe ...
- Claudine Barretto speaks up vs BIR. She tells Jocelyn Valle. "In 2003, I was the No. 1 taxpayer [in show biz]. I paid more than my bosses [at ABS-CBN]."
- Willie Revillame weds Liz Almoro. "This is for keeps," he tells Nini Valera in a text message.
- RP leads Asean anti-piracy campaign. By Nini Valera.
- SM cinemas go digital. The country's leading cinemaplex chain purchases seven digital projectors, in anticipation of more Pinoy digital movies. **By Bayani San Diego Jr.**
- The Revillas vs Rosanna Roces. Underage father Jolo Revilla admits, "Parenting is not easy." **By Nini Valera**
- BIR shoots for the stars. Bureau of Internal Revenue runs after Regine Velasquez, Richard Gomez and Judy Ann Santos. **By Armand Nocum, Michelle V. Remo and Cynthia D. Balana**
- "Darna" and "Encantadia" exclusives, including first-crack pictorials. **By Marinel Cruz, Jocelyn Valle and Kathryn Fatima Reyes**
- MTRCB warnings and suspensions. Subjects: Richard Gomez, Joey Marquez, Joey de Leon, even shows like 'Extra Challenge" and "Pinoy Big Brother." **By Marinel R. Cruz, Jocelyn Valle and Alexa H. Bacay**
- "Yesterday" features. INQUIRER Entertainment tracks down superstars of yesteryears. Bayani San Diego Jr. is especially proud of his rare and delightful interview with Mona Lisa, screen queen of the '30s and '40s, who reveals she has a son by Fernando Poe Sr.!
- First peek at QTV 11's all-woman lineup. **By Bayani San Diego Jr.**
- Lea Salonga, mother-to-be, talks about the early stage of her pregnancy in an e-mail to Bayani San Diego Jr.
- Laurice Guillen snaps back. "I felt very humiliated," she says of her departure from the Film Development Council of the Philippines. **By Bayani San Diego Jr.**
- What, no Oscar entry from RP? **By Ruben V. Nepales and Bayani San Diego Jr.**

And judging from constant reader feedback via e-mail, a perennial winner for both among us in here and among many of you out there is Nestor U. Torre's "Boob-tube booboos."

As NUT himself would say, "Ay, perennial *daw, o!*"

MMTA
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4	HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

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4	THE FOG

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4	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

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3 (DOLBY)	DOOM

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2	MAHAROT
3	HAYOP SA SEX APPEAL
4 (DTS)	THE MYTH

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1 (DOLBY)	THE FOG
2	ISLA ASUL
3 (DTS)	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4	MAHAROT
5	HARI NG SABLAY

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1	HARI NG SABLAY
2	DOOM
3	AGOS
4	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

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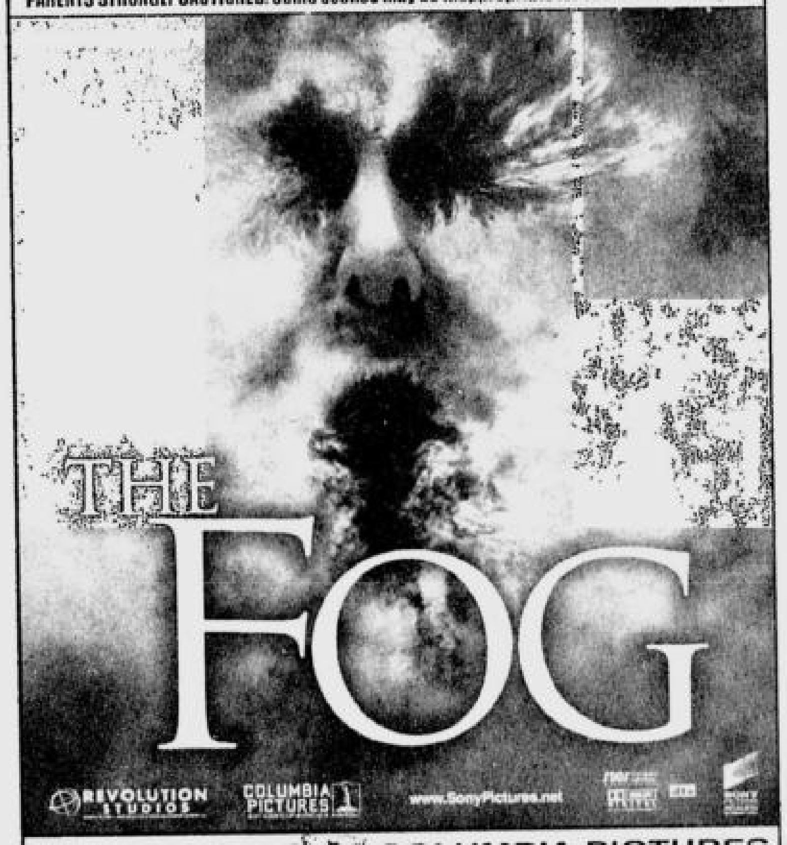

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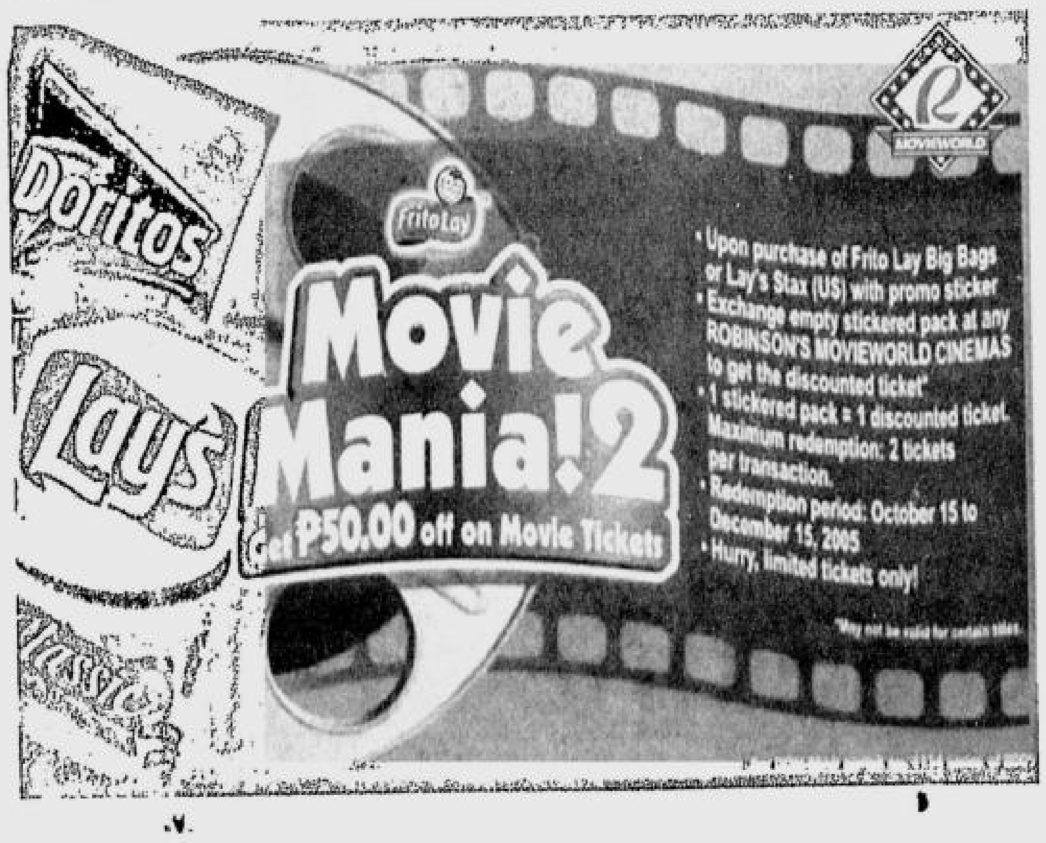

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5 THE FOG
6 IN HER SHOES
7 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 THE MYTH
10 BILOG / CIRCLES

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1 THE FOG
2 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
3 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 CHICKEN LITTLE
THE MYTH
5 IN HER SHOES
6 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
7 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

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2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
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4 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
5 IN HER SHOES
6 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
7 THE FOG
8 THE MYTH

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1 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
2 CHICKEN LITTLE
3 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 IN HER SHOES
6 THE FOG

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1 HARI NG SABLAY
2 THE MYTH
3 RESERVE
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1 THE FOG
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3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 IN HER SHOES

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3 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
4 CHICKEN LITTLE
5 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

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2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

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1 THE FOG
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 PRIME
4 BLADE OF THE ROSE

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1 THE FOG
2 FOUR BROTHERS
3 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
4 HARI NG SABLAY

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2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 PRIME

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1 CHICKEN LITTLE
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 PRIME
5 APRIL SNOW
6 THE FOG

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2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
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5 HARI NG SABLAY
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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 IN HER SHOES	2 THE FOG	3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS	4 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AN UNFINISHED LIFE	2 KISS KISS BANG BANG	3 THX THE FOG 1:30, 3:45, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE	5 CHICKEN LITTLE	6 IN HER SHOES	7 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 IN HER SHOES 12:10, 2:45, 5:20, 8:00	2 THE FOG 12:00, 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX AN UNFINISHED LIFE 2:00, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX IN HER SHOES 1:00, 3:35, 6:10, 8:45, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KISS KISS BANG BANG 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 THE FOG 2:00, 4:15, 6:30, 9:45, 11:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX IN HER SHOES	2 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE		
	3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN	4 IN HER SHOES	5 CHICKEN LITTLE	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE FOG	2 A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE	3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN	4 CHICKEN LITTLE

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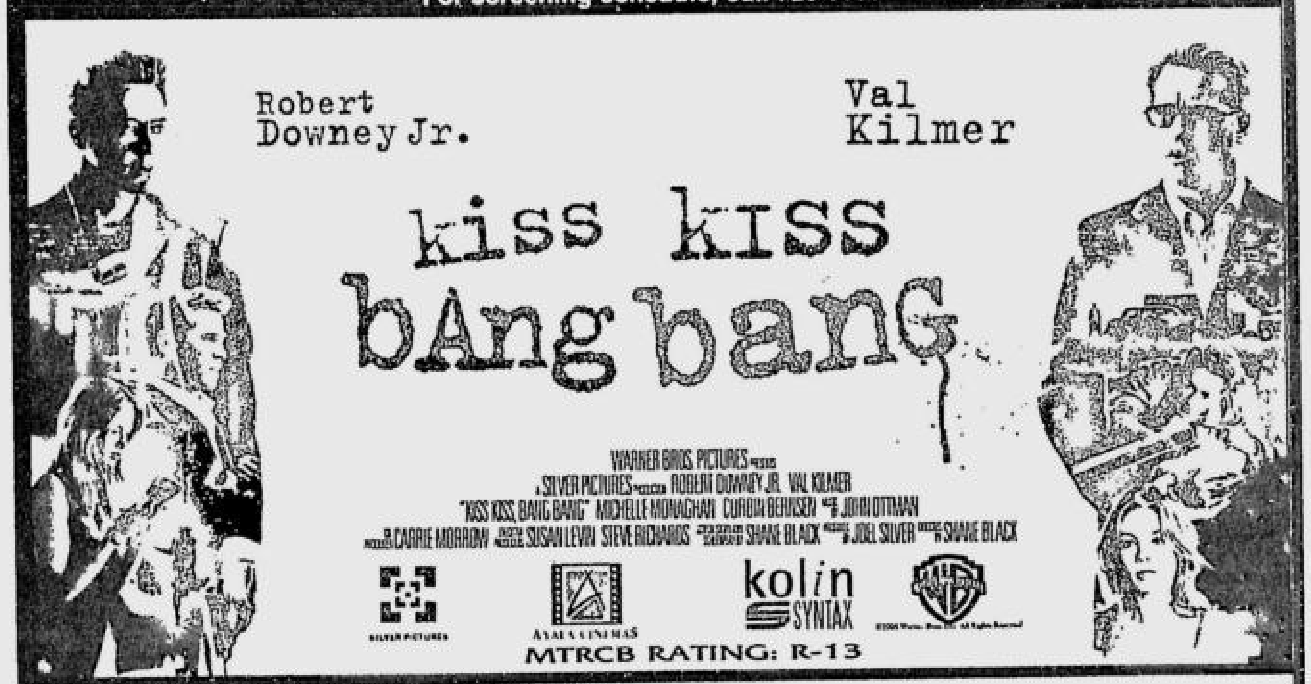
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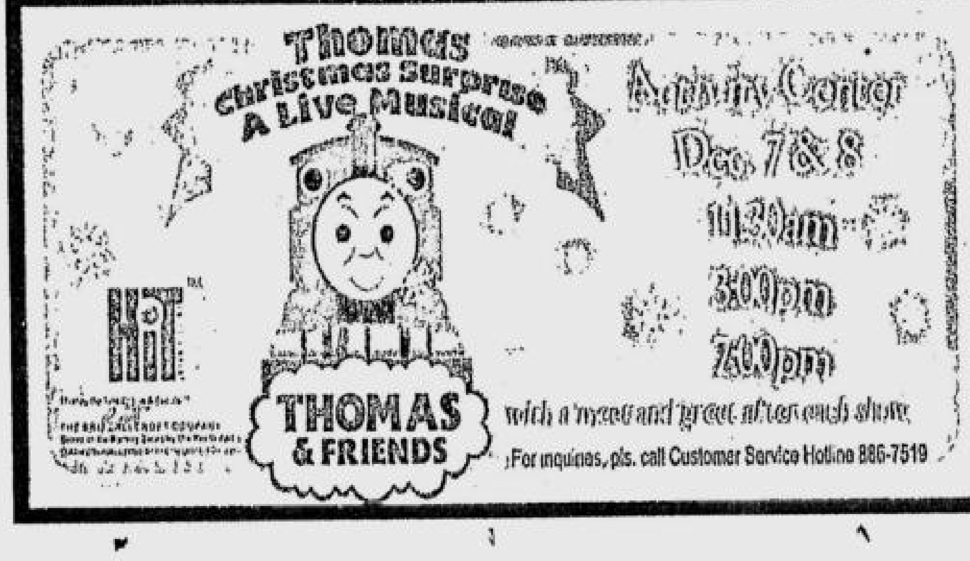
④ In Her Shoes
⑤ Chicken Little

EVENTS! EVENTS!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The thrill is gone from 'Starstruck'

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WE'VE BEEN VIEWING THE INITIAL STAGES of the third "Starstruck" talent search on GMA-7, and can share these preliminary notes:

Among the 20 current survivors, the most interesting talents are generally female. The female contestants are also the best lookers in the tilt. Let's hope that the guys have something more going for them, or else the "final-finals" could be a mostly female showdown!

We note, however, that most of the 20 survivors are *tisoys* and *tisays*. It's clear that this year's tilt isn't about to buck the *mestizo* domination of the local show biz scene for, lo, these many years.

That's a pity, because *tisoy* starlets tend to look the same, and we really need greater variety in local entertainment. And, let's face it, our *tisoy* hang-up is really discriminatory against *kayumanggi* talents, some of whom could have more to offer than their *mestizo* counterparts.

In the end, therefore, our colonial mentality is a liability because it limits the richness and diversity of our entertainment options, and we're all the poorer for it.

Viewing the "Starstruck" telecasts, we also observe that the thrill that attended the talent search's first year is now largely gone. That is because "Starstruck" 1 and 2 showed that, after all of the difficult and exhausting tests they underwent during the tilt, the winners didn't become particularly outstanding performers.

Yes, they became popular, but the level of their work generally hasn't been any higher than the performances turned in by non-winning talents.

What happened? Well, despite all of its protestations to the contrary, the local show biz scene doesn't really give young talents many opportunities to excel.

All it really needs to keep ga-ga fans happy is fresh supplies of starlets who look good, can sort of act, sing and dance, and can click with mostly young viewers.

Unnecessarily harsh

Having learned that, we now see that past "Starstruck" elimination processes were too unnecessarily harsh and even sadistic in their treatment of the young finalists. Why such rigorous and even cruel "training" for the mediocre roles that came after? Why, indeed.

Therefore, we trust that this year's finalists will be treated in a much less sadistic way by the tilt's staffers and judges. Instead of developing young "total performers," "Starstruck 3" should concentrate on charisma, appeal and a modicum of performing skills, because that seems to be all that local show biz generally expects and needs.

PPO's free concert

Music lovers, celebrate the Yuletide season by attending the free concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra at 8 p.m. at Folk Arts Theater grounds. Guest soloist are noted Australian harpist **Marshall McGuire** and Filipino flutist **Enrique Barcelo. Mark Allen McCoy** conducts the PPO.

Titled "Christmas Romance," the PPO concert's repertoire includes Rimsky-Korsakov's "Suite, Christmas Eve," Mozart's "Concert for Flute and Harp, K. 299," Henderson's "A Canadian Brass Christmas" and Tchaikovsky's "Valse Finale et Aptheose" from "The Nutcracker." Call. 832-3704.

'The Man'

Samuel L. Jackson and **Eugene Levy** co-star for the first time in "The Man." In the police caper, Jackson plays an undercover FBI agent who's given 24 hours to solve a multimillion-dollar arms heist and cop killing.

He finds an unlikely ally in Levy's character, a dental supply salesman who is mistaken by the bad guys as the buyer in a stolen arms deal. Jackson is forced to use the talkative salesman as the "face" of his sting operation—and the chase is on!

'Everything about it is appealing . . .

From page A1

vision and foundation-laying work of previous teams led by former editors Rosario A. Garcellano, who's now associate editor for readership; Nestor Torre, Edmund L. Sicam and Louie C. Camino (†).

For their pioneering work, we also thank former columnists Alfie Lorenzo, Bibsy Carballo, Billy Balbastro, JC Nigado, Oscar Salazar (†), Oscar Miranda (†), Leah Salterio, Kris Aquino and Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon.

Where do we go from here? The work is clearly cut out for the staff, as INQUIRER Entertainment presents a single distinct proposal. Now we borrow from controversial young filmmaker Morgan Spurlock: "Super Size Me!"

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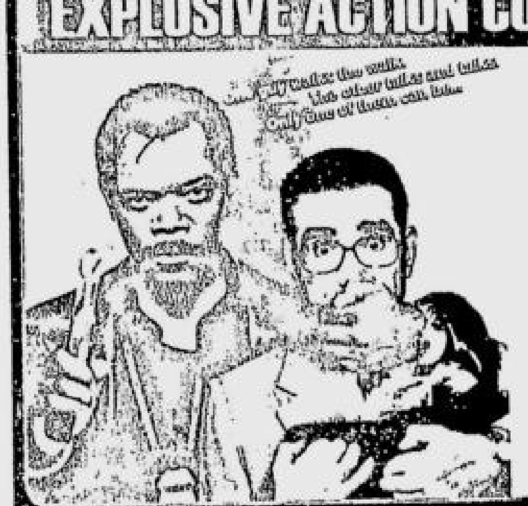

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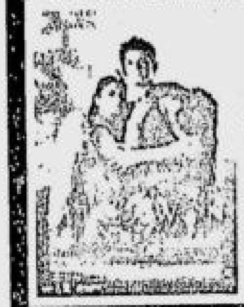

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Dec. 20 • The Podium • Cinema 2
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Dec. 21 • The Podium • Cinema 2
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THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 IN HER SHOES
12:35FS/01:05MF/03:40/06:15
08:20LFS/09:00LMF/11:05END
2 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
08:00LFS/08:30LMF/10:20END
MEGAMALL
1 THE FOG
11:15FS/11:40MF/01:40/03:40/05:40
07:40/09:20LFS/09:40LMF/11:20END
CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 RESERVED
2 THE FOG
12:00FS/12:10MF/02:00/03:54/05:46
07:38/09:17LFS/09:30LMF/11:10END
3 HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE
12:00FS/12:15MF/03:20/06:25
09:05LFS/09:30LMF/12:10END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 THE FOG
2 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
3 CHICKEN LITTLE
4 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
5 THE MYTH
6 IN HER SHOES
7 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
8 HARI NG SABLAY
9 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
10 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
11 MERRY CHRISTMAS
12 THE MAN

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
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3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 IN HER SHOES
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6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 HARI NG SABLAY
8 THE MAN
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 CHICKEN LITTLE

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 THE FOG
2 HARI NG SABLAY
3 THE MAN
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 THE FOG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 MERRY CHRISTMAS
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE MYTH
6 HARI NG SABLAY
7 THE FOG
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 IN HER SHOES
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 THE MAN
12 PRIME

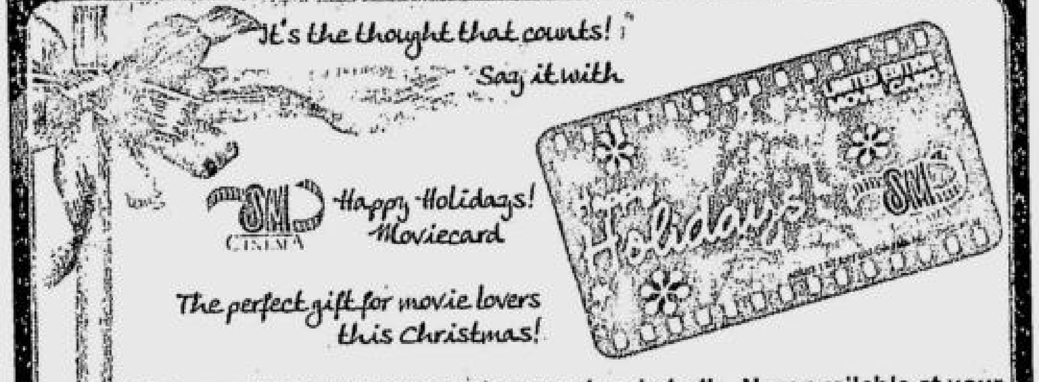
SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 THE FOG
2 CHICKEN LITTLE
3 IN HER SHOES
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 THE MAN
8 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 HARI NG SABLAY

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 THE MAN
2 THE FOG
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 IN HER SHOES

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 THE FOG
2 THE MYTH
3 IN HER SHOES
4 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
7 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
8 THE MAN

SM CITY MANILA
1 THE FOG
2 IN HER SHOES
3 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE MAN
6 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 BLOODFIST 2050: THE LEGEND CONTINUES
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
11 HARI NG SABLAY
12 THE MYTH

SM CINEMA SAN LAZARO
1 THE FOG
2 THE MAN
3 IN HER SHOES
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE



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LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
2 CHICKEN LITTLE
3 THE FOG
4 APRIL SNOW
5 THE MYTH
6 HARI NG SABLAY

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 THE FOG
2 CHICKEN LITTLE
3 THE MYTH
4 THE MAN

SM CITY MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 THE MAN
4 HARI NG SABLAY

SM CITY BACOOR
1 THE MAN
2 THE MYTH
3 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
4 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
5 THE FOG
6 HARI NG SABLAY
7 IN HER SHOES
8 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

SM CITY MARILAO
1 CHICKEN LITTLE
2 HARI NG SABLAY
3 THE FOG
4 FOUR BROTHERS

SM CITY DASMARIÑAS
1 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
2 HARI NG SABLAY
3 CHICKEN LITTLE
4 THE FOG

SM CITY LUCENA
1 THE MYTH
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 APRIL SNOW
4 HARI NG SABLAY

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 THE MYTH
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 CHICKEN LITTLE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 RESERVED
2 THE FOG
3 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
4 JUST LIKE HEAVENS
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 HARI NG SABLAY
7 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
8 DUNGEONS AND DRAGON

SM CITY ILOILO
1 DOMINO
2 RESERVED
3 THE MYTH
4 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
7 RESERVED
8 THE FOG

SM CITY DAVAO
1 DOMINO
2 CRY WOLF
3 HARI NG SABLAY
4 THE MYTH
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 THE FOG

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 CHICKEN LITTLE
2 FOUR BROTHERS
3 MY SASSY GIRL
4 THE MYTH

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE
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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE
1 IN HER SHOES
2 CHICKEN LITTLE 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 GP
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00 GP
4 THE FOG 11:55, 2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:00 PG-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
CHICKEN LITTLE GP 1:00,3:00,5:00,7:00,9:00
IN HER SHOES PG13 2:20,5:00,7:40,10:20
AN UNFINISHED LIFE PG13 1:30,3:55,6:20,8:45
THE FOG PG13 1:35,3:45,5:55,8:05,10:15
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE GP 12:00,3:10,6:20,9:30
JUST LIKE HEAVEN GP 1:35,3:45,5:55,8:05,10:15
SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL 898 1440-41.

SHANG CINEPLEX
1 CHICKEN LITTLE MTRCB: GP 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, 9:20
2 THE FOG MTRCB: PG-13 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
3 HARRY POTTER 4 MTRCB: GP 12:15, 3:30, 6:45, 10:00
4 IN HER SHOES MTRCB: PG-13 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE JUST LIKE HEAVEN MTRCB GP 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
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CINEMA 2 CHICKEN LITTLE GP 11:25, 1:30, 3:35, 5:40, 7:45, 9:50
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
PROMENADE GREENHILLS
...a dinertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 3 UNFINISHED LIFE - PG13 10:50, 1:15, 3:35, 5:55, 8:15, 10:35
CINEMA 4 THE FOG PG13 10:50, 1:05, 3:20, 5:35, 7:50, 10:10
CINEMA 5 IN HER SHOES PG13 11:15, 2:10, 5:00, 7:50, 10:35
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.
MUSIC MUSEUM
December 10, 2005 CUESHE 8PM
December 17, 2005 MIFHKA ADAMS 8PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635

Araneta Center Leisure Guide
CINEMA SCHEDULES
Gateway CINEPLEX 10
LEVEL 4, GATEWAY MALL
ONLY P99 ADMISSION
P120 RESERVED SEATS
P140 HARRY POTTER
GLOBE PLATINUM P249 / P299
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX
FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CALL TICKETNET AT 911-5555
IN HER SHOES 1:05 / 3:55 / 6:45 / 9:35
THE FOG 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40
KISNA 1:00 / 6:30
MERRY CHRISTMAS 4:10 / 9:40
UNFINISHED LIFE 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
...MAXIMO OLIVEROS 12:40 / 2:50 / 5:00 / 7:10 / 9:20
GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
IN HER SHOES 12:30 / 3:20 / 6:10 / 9:00
CHICKEN LITTLE 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30
JUST LIKE HEAVEN 12:40 / 2:50 / 5:00 / 7:10 / 9:20
EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE 1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40
HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE 12:40 / 3:40 / 6:40 / 9:40
ALI MALL CINEMAS
1 THE FOG 12:10 R4 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
2 HARI NG SABLAY 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00
3 ...MAXIMO OLIVEROS 12:05 R3/ 1:45 / 3:55 / 6:05 / 8:15
4 THE MYTH 12:20 / 3:05 / 5:50 / 8:35
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET 12:00 R3 / 2:20 / 4:20 / 6:20 / 8:20
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS
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Dec 8 Thu LEGENDS GAME 4:30 pm DREAM GAME 7pm
URCC - THE ART OF WAR
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Evicted Say nurses a broken heart

"I LOVED and trusted JB. How could he do this?"

By Nini Valera

IN A HEART-WRENCHING ANTI-CLIMAX in the last leg of "Pinoy Big Brother," evicted housemate Say Alonzo announced on national television Monday night that she and boyfriend JB Magsaysay, also a former housemate, were no longer together.

"I still love JB, but I want to be fair to myself," Say, 26, told INQUIRER Entertainment the next day, when she was presented to members of the press.

She garnered only 6.9 percent of the text votes from televiewers, leaving only four housemates—Uma, Cass, Nene and Jayson—in competition for prizes worth at least P5 million, including a house and lot package and a car.

Say's love affair with JB unfurled on national television inside Big Brother's house.

She broke off with JB after she learned from relatives (minutes after she stepped out of the PBB house on Saturday) that JB had gone out on dates with actress Angelica Panganiban.

One of the most damning pieces of evidence against JB's supposed unfaithfulness was a cell phone picture of JB and the former child actress in an intimate pose, according to Say.

"She was leaning against him in a half embrace," Say said, describing the picture that her sister had shown her while in the car on their way to ABS-CBN after Say was evicted.

A token hug

At the studio, instead of a passionate kiss or a tight embrace from JB, Say said, she got a token hug and a shy kiss.

"That's when I began to feel something was wrong," Say admitted.

JB explained later that he felt funny kissing Say in front of her grandmother.

"What's the big deal?" Say wondered. "I was excited to leave the PBB house to be with him. I am so hurt. I loved him and trusted him. I hoped that we would be together forever."

Say was obviously uncomfortable to be performing with JB in a dance number with the rest of the evicted housemates on "ASAP" last Sunday. In fact, Say was paired off with Sam.

"You could tell that her feelings [about JB] were genuine," quipped PBB director Lauren Dyogi.

Say said that the first time she had a moment with JB was when he visited her at the hotel where she had been staying since Saturday night.

"Angelica was with him," she said.

Their heart-to-heart talk occurred only last Monday, a few hours before she went back to the PBB house to talk to Big Brother to ask if he could tell the four remaining housemates that she had decided to break off with JB.

"They have been a part of me ... of this [romance] with JB," Say said, explaining why she had to confide to Cass, Uma, Nene and Jayson. "I didn't want them to be the last to know."

Big Brother gave Say 100 seconds to tell her four friends. It seemed like an eternity, Say recalled. At the "confessional," tears streaming down her face, she told them how much she felt betrayed.

On bended knees

But Say also said that JB, on bended knees, had begged her for a chance to explain and to prove his sincerity. Things were not what they seemed, he told her.

"But my family wouldn't lie to me," Say said.

Inside the house, where it all started, Say said good-bye, at least for the moment, to JB.

"I am just so glad that all my activities after the eviction are keeping me busy," said Say.

"I promised myself that the first thing I'd do once I got out of the PBB house was to go on a gimmick. But I don't even have the time to cry over JB."

Pawing each other at work

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

A PRODUCTION STAFF member of GMA 7 told me that **Mark Herras** and **Ryza Cenon** were all over each other during the shoot of "Sunsilk Touch Flicks." As she put it, "*Lampungan sila nang lampungan!*" Were they just rehearsing their scenes for "Haplos" (their short film in the Sunsilk TV special)?

But what's this I hear that Mark's "official" girlfriend is new teen star **Marian Rivera**? My source revealed, "He split up with Jennylyn because he could no longer stand her mood swings." With so many girls being linked to Mark, I wonder who will leave an indelible mark in his heart.

Booba's tattoo

I had a super duper fun time with **Giselle Sanchez** and Tita **Lolit Solis** as judges in Ethel Booba's QTV show, "Show Ko." It's like the fast food of talent search shows. Contestants are given 30 seconds to do their thing, but even before their time is up, they can be voted out.

Some people will do the craziest things just to get in the limelight for a fleeting moment. We kept teasing Ethel to the Amboy contestant. Lolit ribbed her, "After **Alex Crisano**, here's another Amboy to teach you more English."

The Amboy was game and Ethel was obviously thrilled. But in her patented Booba humor she said, "His name should also be Alex because that's what's tattooed above my ______. Or I can just tell him that we can name our baby Alex!"

She admits that she still has a soft spot for Alex. She said they tried to talk things over but, out of rage, she slapped him while they were having dinner in a steak house.

"Weird *ako talaga*," she sighed. "*Minsan magugulat na lang si* Alex *na babangon ako sa kama pag-uwi niya and bigla ko siyang kakalmutin ala*-Catwoman!" She may have lost all her senses when she fell for Alex but her sense of humor has remained intact.

Who's the dad?

I find it ridiculous that **Benjie Paras** is said to be spreading allegations that **Joey Marquez** is the father of his estranged wife's (**Jackie Forster**) unborn child. Joey is his buddy; okay, perhaps he said that in jest. Still I am not inclined to believe. He has sired many kids with different women, and stood by all of them. He interviewed Jackie about her pregnancy on "S-Files." They both seemed at ease. If they were doing a cover up, it would have shown. TV is a cruel medium. An extreme close-up is a dead giveaway if you're lying through your teeth.

Saving face

- In the **Dan Fernandez-Sheila Ysrael** marital scandal, it appears to me that Sheila is the one trying to save face. No man in his right mind would make up stories that his wife cheated on him. Why fabricate stories that will make you less of a man? Machismo still prevails among Pinoys.
- Press people were irked when evicted PBB housemate **Chix** came three hours late for her presscon. Already a prima donna?
- I was shocked to find out from one Calayan celebrity endorser that she had to pay for all her body enhancement by **Dr. Manny Calayan**. All he gave her for free were diet pills.

Life after Snooky

For **Ricardo Cepeda**, there's life after Snooky. Instead of retaliating after his wife let out a mouthful against him, he has opted to focus on his direct selling company (New Image International) business. The firm, based in New Zealand, specializes in health products.

He should find a cure for his achy-breaky heart; Snooky is filing for annulment.

Underground trance

Bigfish presents "Back to Basics" with super club DJ **John Kelly**'s (of Liverpool) hard underground trance and **Erwin Edralin** of Team Bigfish on Dec. 10 (9 p.m. onwards) at Embassy Super Club, The Fort.

My gift

Merci beaucoup, BDC for making me smile non-stop. You are the Christmas gift I always wanted but never thought I'd find.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com)

PMPC: Maybe next time

Few stars turn up for Star Awards

JUDY ANN Santos, Best Drama Actress for "Krystala."

By Marinel R. Cruz

"WE COULDN'T GET A PRODUCER until the month prior to the program. For the awards night in March, we will be more prepared."

Philippine Movie Press Club President Joe Barrameda was discussing with INQUIRER Entertainment last Sunday's Star Awards for Movies.

The show was produced by Pro-Ads Concept. Unlike its rival group, the Entertainment Press Society (Enpress), which decided not to televise its annual awards rites, PMPC aired its show on Channel 13 last night.

"Only a few stars showed up; we failed to send their nomination cards on time," said Barrameda. "We had to confirm the venue before printing the invitations."

The ceremony was held at Party Central resto-bar in Quezon City.

"We'd like the Star Awards for Movies next year to run more smoothly," Barrameda said. "Last Sunday, *ang gusto lang ng* producers *ang nasunod*. We did not receive any royalty. We don't know how much money [producers] Henry Tan and Lolit Ching made."

The winners

Talents from ABS-CBN bagged the most awards, but GMA 7 was heralded Best TV Station.

Judy Ann Santos, Best Drama Actress for "Krystala"; John Lloyd Cruz, Best Drama Actor for "It Might Be You."

Ruffa Mae Quinto, Best Comedy Actress for "Bubble Gang"; Keempee de Leon, Best Comedy Actor for "Bahay Mo Ba 'To."

Paolo Bediones, Best Reality Competition Show Host, "Extra Challenge." He shared the Best Male Show Biz-Oriented Talk Show Host plum with Boy Abunda, who hosts "The Buzz."

Cristy Fermin, Best Female Show Biz-Oriented Talk Show Host.

Baron Geisler, Best Single Performance by an Actor for an episode of ABS-CBN's "Maalaala Mo Kaya"; Lorna Tolentino, Best Single Performance by an Actress for an episode of "Magpakailanman."

"Asap Mania," Best Musical Variety Show Award; "Eat Bulaga!", Best Variety Show Award.

Regine Velasquez, Best Female TV Host for "SOP"; Willie Revillame, Best Male TV Host for "Wowowee."

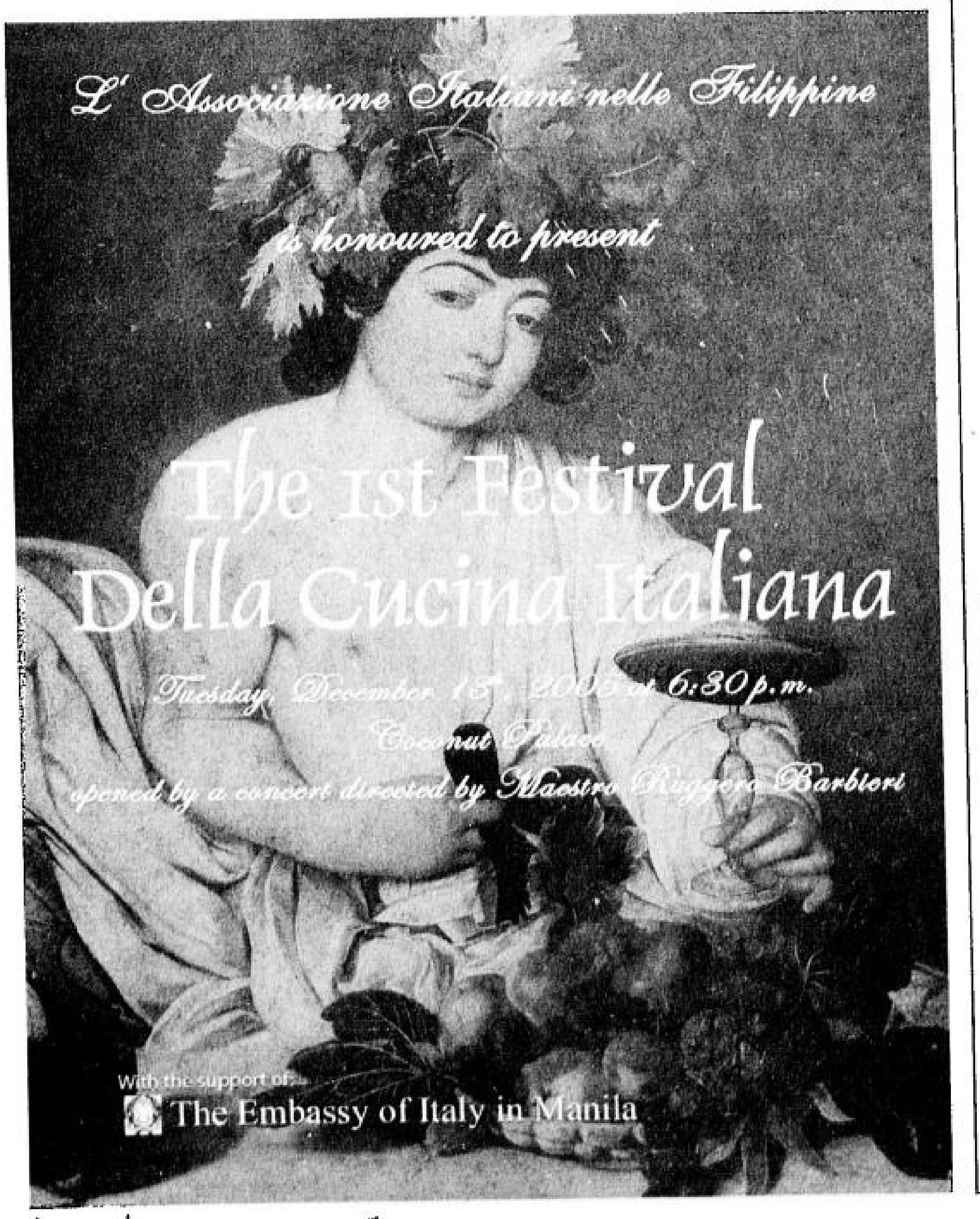
"Maalaala Mo Kaya," Best Drama Anthology; "Mulawin," Best Primetime Drama Series.

"Bubble Gang" and "Going Bulilit" shared the Best Gag Show Award.

"Daddy Di Do Du," Best Comedy Show; "The Buzz," Best Show Biz-Oriented Talk Show.

"HomeBoy," Best Celebrity Talk Show.

Joross Gamboa and Melissa Ricks of "Star Circle Quest," Best New TV Personalities.



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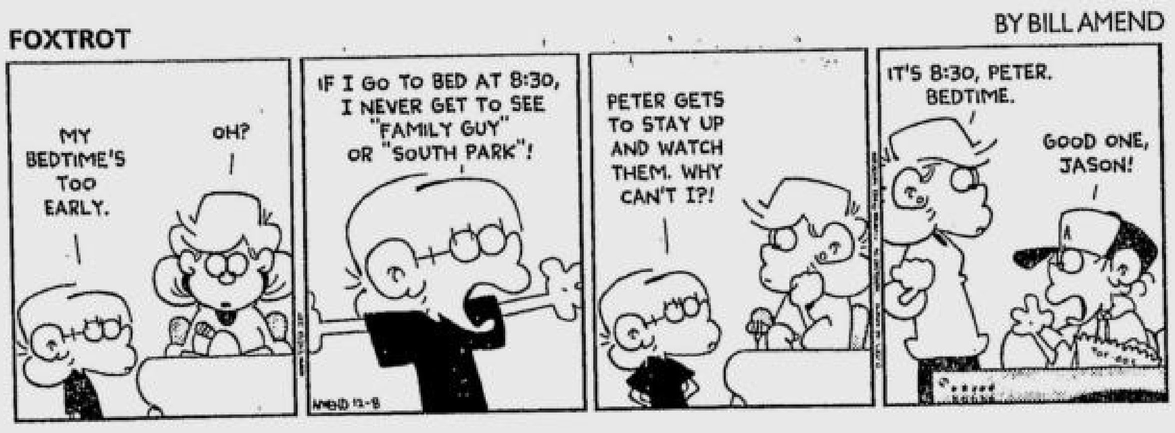
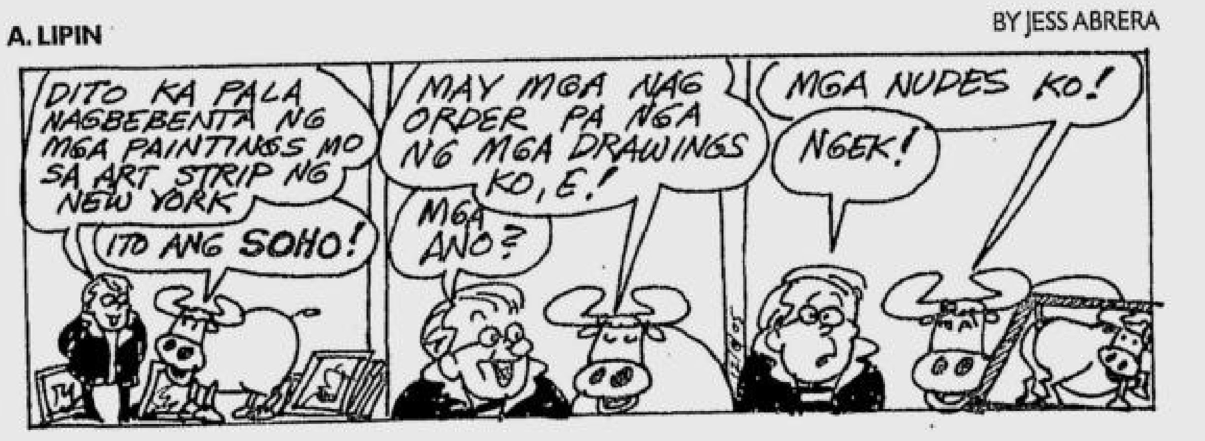
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


MY BEDTIME'S TOO EARLY.
OH?
IF I GO TO BED AT 8:30, I NEVER GET TO SEE "FAMILY GUY" OR "SOUTH PARK"!
PETER GETS TO STAY UP AND WATCH THEM. WHY CAN'T I?!
IT'S 8:30, PETER. BEDTIME.
GOOD ONE, JASON!
AMEND 12-8

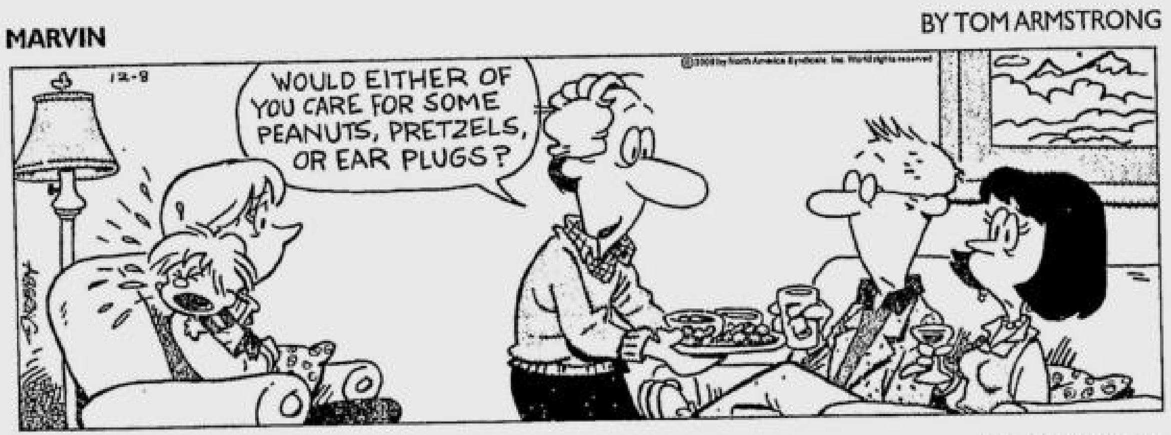
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


DITO KA PALA NAGBEBENTA NG MGA PAINTINGS MO SA ART STRIP NG NEW YORK
ITO ANG SOHO!
MAY MGA NAG ORDER PA NGA NG MGA DRAWINGS KO, E.!
MGA ANO?
MGA NUDES KO!
NGEK!

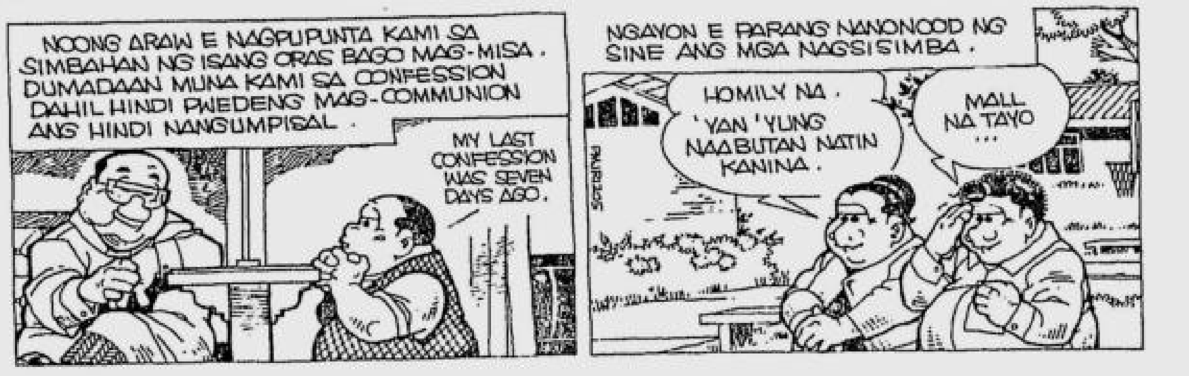
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


12-8
WOULD EITHER OF YOU CARE FOR SOME PEANUTS, PRETZELS, OR EAR PLUGS?

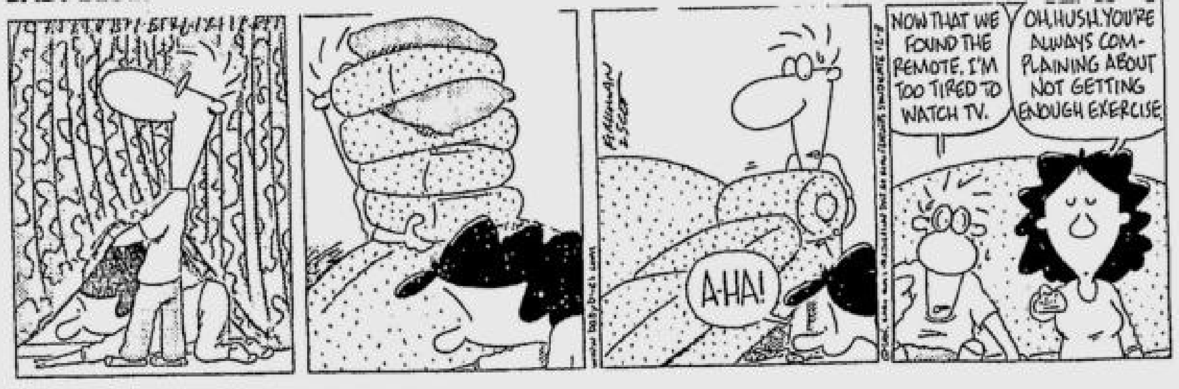
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NOONG ARAW E NAGPUPUNTA KAMI SA SIMBAHAN NG ISANG ORAS BAGO MAG-MISA. DUMADAAN MUNA KAMI SA CONFESSION DAHIL HINDI PWEDENG MAG-COMMUNION ANG HINDI NANGUMPISAL.
MY LAST CONFESSION WAS SEVEN DAYS AGO.
NGAYON E PARANG NANONOOD NG SINE ANG MGA NAGSISIMBA.
HOMILY NA. 'YAN 'YUNG NAABUTAN NATIN KANINA.
MALL NA TAYO ...

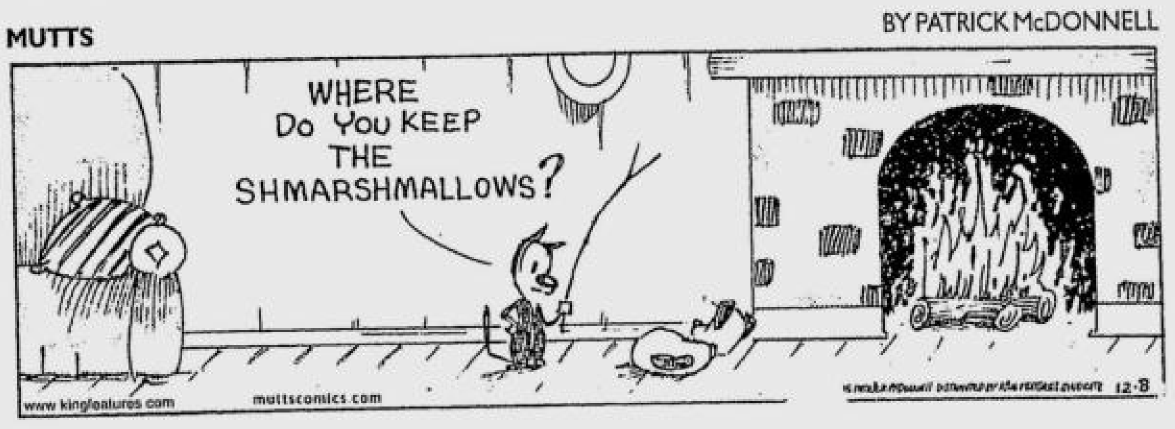
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


A-HA!
NOW THAT WE FOUND THE REMOTE, I'M TOO TIRED TO WATCH TV.
OH, HUSH. YOU'RE ALWAYS COMPLAINING ABOUT NOT GETTING ENOUGH EXERCISE.

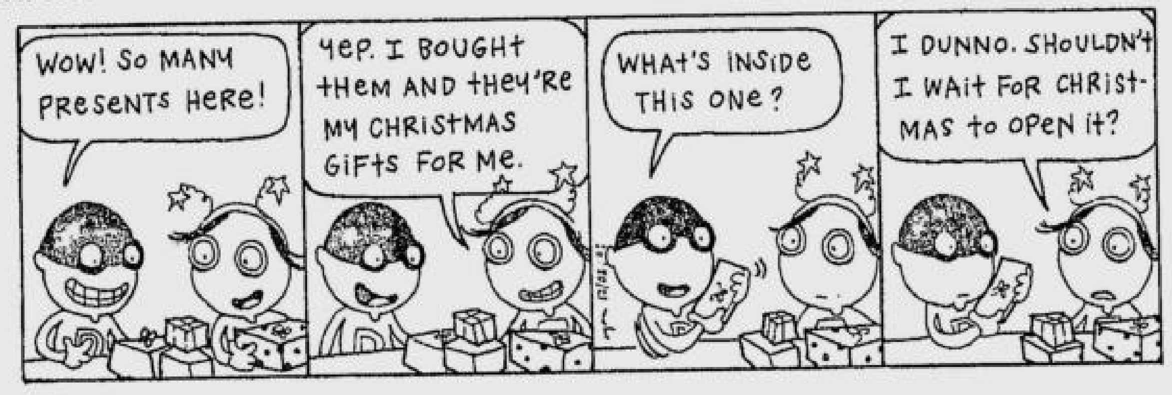
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WHERE DO YOU KEEP THE SHMARSHMALLOWS?
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
12·8

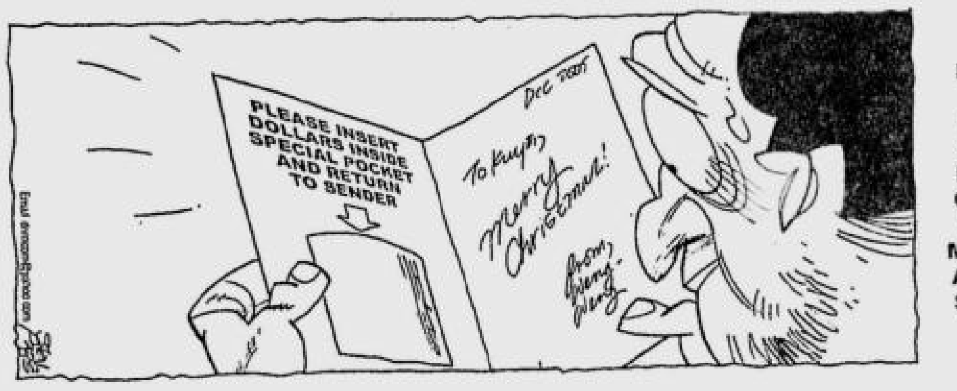
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WOW! SO MANY PRESENTS HERE!
YEP. I BOUGHT THEM AND THEY'RE MY CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR ME.
WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ONE?
I DUNNO. SHOULDN'T I WAIT FOR CHRISTMAS TO OPEN IT?

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


PLEASE INSERT DOLLARS INSIDE SPECIAL POCKET AND RETURN TO SENDER
Dec 2005
To Kuya, Merry Christmas!
from Weng-Weng

NGAYON NA PO ANG TAMANG PANAHON PARA MAGPADALA NG CHRISTMAS CARDS SA MGA KAMAG-ANAK NATIN SA ABROAD. HE-HE-HE

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Essentially, you're upbeat, breezy and friendly. You give your all to whatever you embrace. People admire you for this. Once you aim for something, you're committed! You have lots of passionate energy for life and love. The year ahead is full of new paths and open doors. Anything can happen. You're beginning a new nine-year cycle.
Birthdate of: Gregg Allman, singer; David Carradine, actor; Teri Hatcher, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You might feel quite willful today, especially about matters related to politics, religion, travel or foreign countries. Education is a touchy subject too. Remain calm.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You have definite ideas about how you want to dispense with a certain amount of money (or how to deal with something related to garbage or recycling). First, hear what others have to say.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid heated arguments today. Today's Full Moon brings stress to your closest relationships. Make no demands on them. Wait until tomorrow to state your desires.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): The best way to handle today is to be patient at work. Don't get your belly in a rash. Everyone can feel today's Full Moon—especially you! (Keep smiling.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Parents must be patient with children today. Children and animals can feel the Full Moon too. Remember that true generosity is giving what is needed, and right now, others need your patience and understanding.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Use your energy to get rid of garbage and to address recycling at home. You might also attend to repairs or fixing whatever is broken. Don't throw your weight around in the family.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're highly opinionated about something today. You want to persuade others to agree with you. Actually, this isn't important. Try to let go of this fixation.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You feel a bit obsessed about buying something today. Something having to do with money or possessions has you by the throat. Resist this feeling. It will pass very quickly. (Trust your common sense.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're so enthused about something today that you want everybody to agree with you. Don't go overboard trying to get this result. Learn to live and let live. (It's easier.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might come across an unusual secret today. Do not use this information to manipulate others. Be discreet.

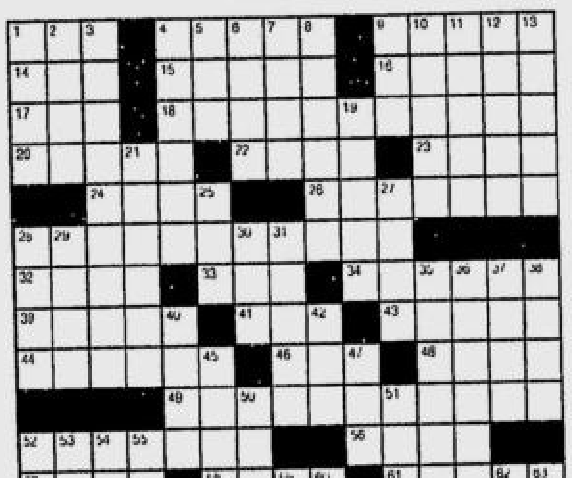
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might attract someone to you who is intent on convincing you of something Possibly, you're trying to do this to someone else. Either way, this is not skillful.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Someone might try to exert unreasonable power over you today. Or perhaps you will have to fix what is broken. People make demands on your time today.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Soup veggie
4 Boxer Roberto
9 Plant pore
14 Coffee server
15 Juarez January
16 Loudness units
17 Sch. near Harvard
18 Start of William Blake quote
20 Director Kurosawa
22 For two, in music
23 Robert Pirsig book
24 Proofreader's mark
26 Smiled derisively
28 Part 2 of quote
32 Host of Parisians?
33 Actress Scala
34 Nuclear sub
39 Shaq of the NBA
41 Shade tree
43 Nappy leather
44 Members of a Jamaican religious sect
46 Lacking brightness
48 Speaker of baseball
49 Part 3 of quote
52 Upholstery fabric
56 Stated
57 Part of U.A.R.
58 Greek letter
61 Pigs' pads
64 End of quote
67 Hail to Horace
68 Drink garnish
69 Banks of baseball
70 Veto
71 Slalom curves
72 College leaders
73 Cunning

DOWN
1 Mountain lion
2 Satie or Estrada
3 Counteractive substances
4 Alaska park
5 One in Toledo
6 McEntire sitcom
7 Saharan
8 Take your time
9 Sound of a leak
10 "A Confederacy of Dunces" author
11 Studio sign
12 Actress Oberon
13 Syrian leader
19 Star in Cygnus
21 Prepare leftovers
25 Type of roll
27 Son of Seth
28 God of thunder
29 One Chaplin
30 Hop to it!
31 Ralph __ Emerson
35 Think better
36 Longitude lines
37 Refine rhetoric
38 Hebrew letter
40 Cohort of Haley and Bolger
42 Actress Farrow
45 Usher
47 El Norte Sra.
50 Put on cargo
51 Gives lip to
52 Sierra Nevada lake
53 Seed covers
54 Foundation
55 Over
59 Grow weary
60 Dancer Pavlova
62 Depraved
63 Physically provocative
65 Unseld of the NBA
66 Tonic's partner



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
12/8/05

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

F	O	L	D	■	S	O	D	O	M	■	A	B	I	E
A	M	O	R	■	A	G	A	V	E	■	S	U	R	F
V	E	R	S	A	I	L	L	E	S	■	S	C	A	T
A	N	D	■	F	L	E	E	R	S	■	E	K	E	S
■	■	■	P	R	O	S	■	L	A	H	T	I	■	■
L	E	S	S	O	R	■	M	A	G	I	■	N	I	T
O	R	C	A	S	■	W	A	D	E	S	■	G	N	U
B	A	H	T	■	F	I	X	E	S	■	S	H	A	D
E	T	O	■	R	O	S	I	N	■	G	U	A	N	O
S	O	N	■	O	R	T	S	■	D	O	R	M	E	R
■	■	B	R	I	E	F	■	P	I	T	A	■	■	■
B	O	R	E	■	S	U	R	E	S	T	■	L	E	G
O	P	U	S	■	E	L	E	S	C	O	R	I	A	L
S	I	N	E	■	E	L	I	T	E	■	E	C	R	U
C	E	N	T	■	S	Y	N	O	D	■	D	E	N	T

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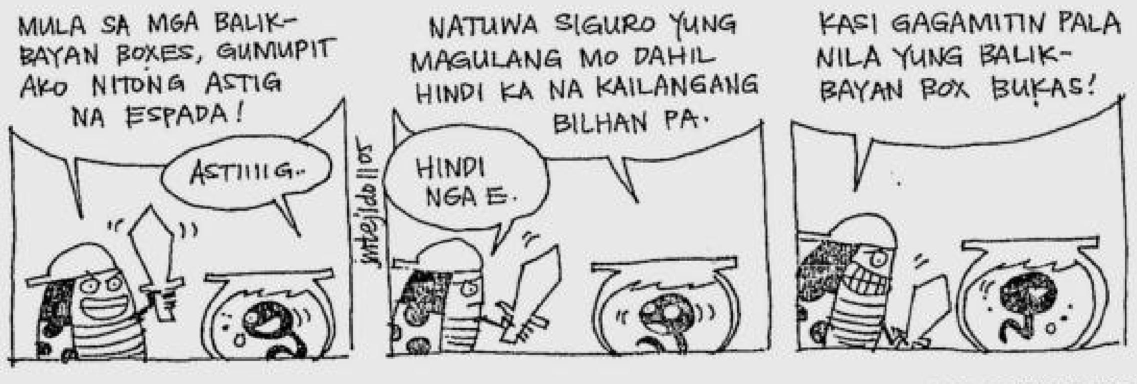
12/8/05

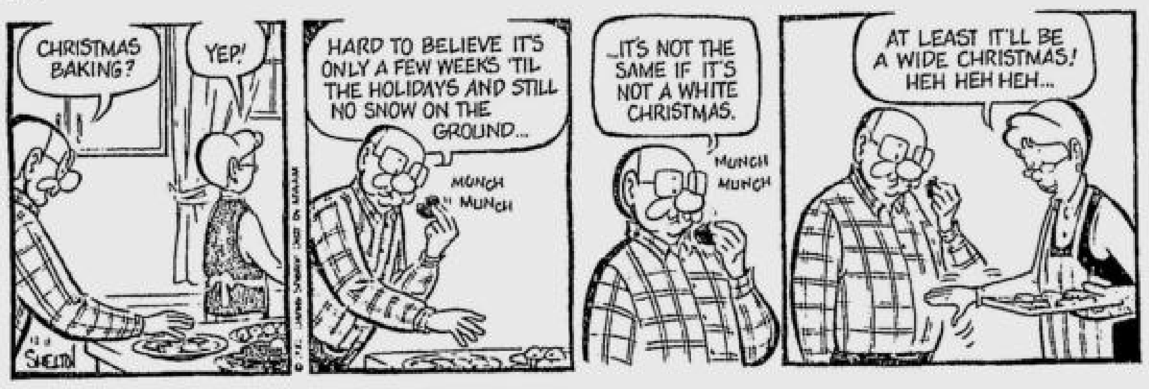
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MULA SA MGA BALIKBAYAN BOXES, GUMUPIT AKO NITONG ASTIG NA ESPADA!
ASTIIIG..
NATUWA SIGURO YUNG MAGULANG MO DAHIL HINDI KA NA KAILANGANG BILHAN PA.
HINDI NGA E.
KASI GAGAMITIN PALA NILA YUNG BALIKBAYAN BOX BUKAS!

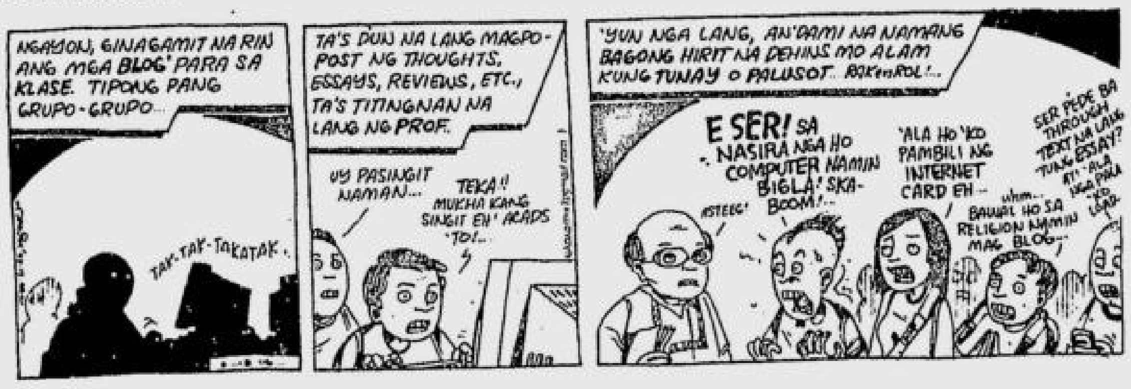
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


CHRISTMAS BAKING?
YEP!
HARD TO BELIEVE IT'S ONLY A FEW WEEKS 'TIL THE HOLIDAYS AND STILL NO SNOW ON THE GROUND...
MUNCH MUNCH
...IT'S NOT THE SAME IF IT'S NOT A WHITE CHRISTMAS.
MUNCH MUNCH
AT LEAST IT'LL BE A WIDE CHRISTMAS! HEH HEH HEH...
SHELTON

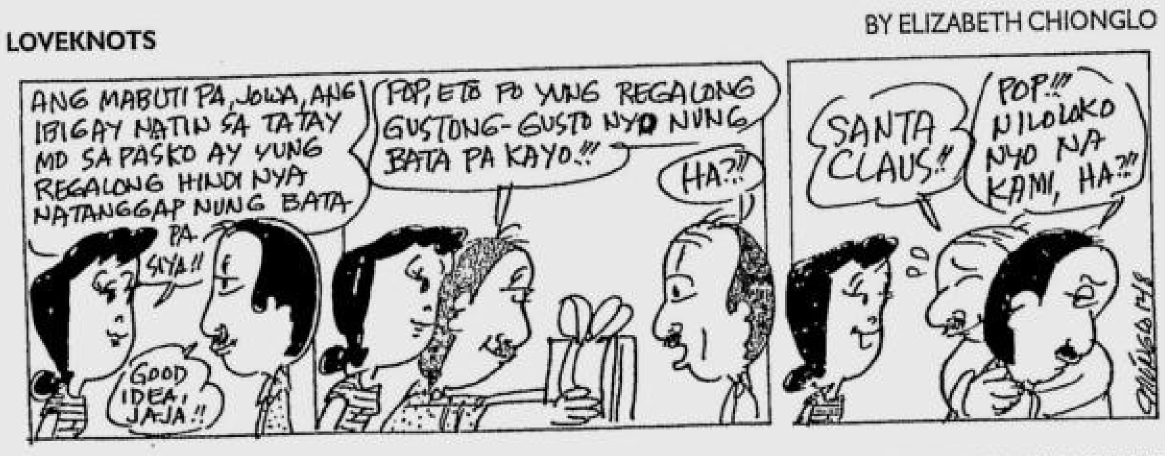
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


NGAYON, GINAGAMIT NA RIN ANG MGA BLOG PARA SA KLASE. TIPONG PANG GRUPO-GRUPO...
TAK-TAK-TAKATAK.
TA'S DUN NA LANG MAGPO-POST NG THOUGHTS, ESSAYS, REVIEWS, ETC., TA'S TITINGNAN NA LANG NG PROF.
UY PASINGIT NAMAN...
TEKA!! MUKHA KANG SINGIT EH' ARADS 'TO!..
'YUN NGA LANG, AN'DAMI NA NAMANG BAGONG HIRIT NA DEHINS MO ALAM KUNG TUNAY O PALUSOT.. ROCKenROL!..
E SER! SA.. NASIRA NGA HO COMPUTER NAMIN BIGLA! SKA-BOOM!..
ASTEEG'
'ALA HO 'KO PAMBILI NG INTERNET CARD EH..
uhm.. BAWAL HO SA RELIGION NAMIN MAG BLOG..
SER PEDE BA THROUGH TEXT NA LANG 'YUNG ESSAY? AT 'ALA 'KO PALA LOAD.

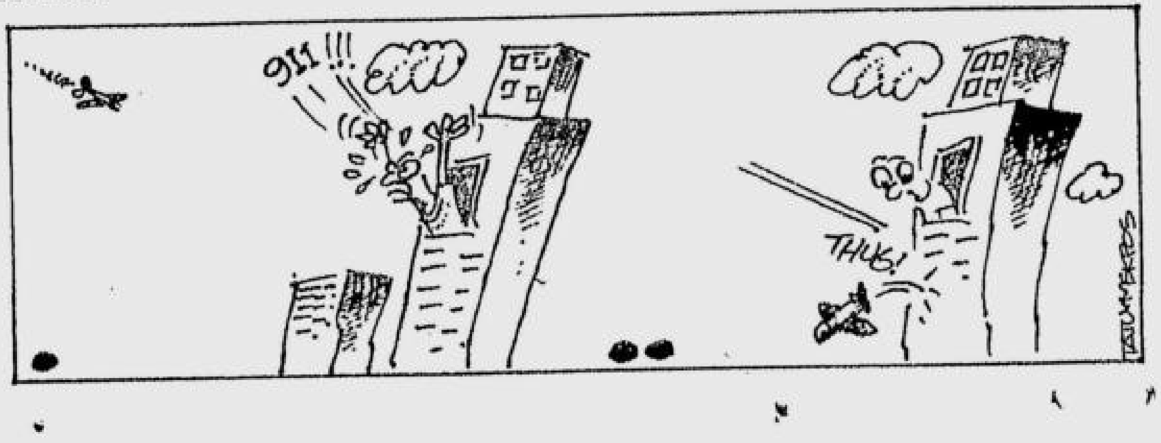
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANG MABUTI PA, JOWA, ANG IBIGAY NATIN SA TATAY MO SA PASKO AY YUNG REGALONG HINDI NYA NATANGGAP NUNG BATA PA SIYA!!
GOOD IDEA, JAJA!!
POP, ETO PO YUNG REGALONG GUSTONG-GUSTO NYO NUNG BATA PA KAYO!!!
HA?!!
SANTA CLAUS!!
POP!!! NILOLOKO NYO NA KAMI, HA?!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



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Julia Vargas Ave. Ortigas Center Pasig City
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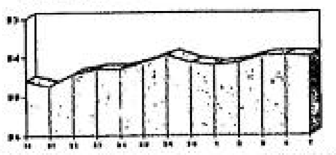
End-November forex reserves hit $18.09B

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

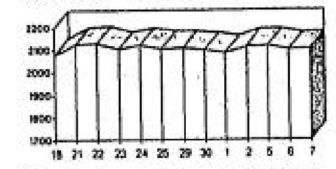
P 53.985 = $ 1

¥ 120.98 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 7, 2005

GOLD: $512.20-512.70

per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 7, 2005



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Shares close higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.2 PERcent higher yesterday, helped by gains in selected blue chips such as

SHARES/ B2

Much higher than $17-B target for '05

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S GROSS INTERNATIONAL RESERVES (GIR) REmained at a healthy level at $18.09 billion as of end-November, or about four months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services and debts.

Although slightly lower than the $18.1 billion a month ago, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the current foreign exchange reserves were still substantially higher than the target of $17 billion for the full year.

"The month-on-month decline in the GIR level was attributed mainly to the payments of maturing foreign exchange obligations of the national government and the Bangko Sentral," Tetangco said.

"The outflows, however, were partly offset by proceeds from the term loan facility and floating rate notes availed of by the Bangko Sentral as well as its income from investments abroad," he said.

The BSP reported a record GIR of $18.54 billion in end-September.

The GIR—consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments—is an indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy like import payments and debt servicing.

END-NOVEMBER/ B3

WHAT'S INSIDE

RP seen getting rating upgrade /B2
PLDT drops bid for Bayantel, Dream TV /B3
Peso stays at 53 to $1 level despite jitters /B4

Weaker consumer spending seen this Christmas season

By Michelle V. Remo

THE YULETIDE MAY NOT BE encouraging for retailers this time around as the volume of yearend sales is expected to decline from a year ago because of the tightening spending habits of Filipinos.

Bernardo Villegas, an economist and vice president at the University of Asia and the Pacific, said retail sales volume might decline by 5 to 10 percent. He identified the increasing propensity of Filipinos to save and the higher cost of basic expenditures, such as oil, transportation and education, as the factors affecting consumption.

"Sales will slow down because Filipinos have become more conservative in their spending habits," Villegas said during the UA&P's yearend economic briefing held yesterday.

Last Nov. 1, the VAT Reform Law took effect. It expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity, among others, and will raise the tax rate from 10 to 12 percent in February next year.

Estimates by the Department of Finance said that total household expenditure would increase by P67 billion because of the implementation of the new VAT law.

The implementation of the tax measure, intended to address the government's gaping budget

WEAKER/ B2

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RP seen getting rating upgrade

Plus points due to VAT reform, stock market performance

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINES HAS A GOOD chance of getting a rating upgrade from Moody's Investors Service with the implementation of the expanded value-added tax that should beef up government revenues and plug the budget deficit, said PSE president Francis Lim.

Lim was scheduled to meet with the Moody's team yesterday as part of the latter's review of the Philippines for next year's rating.

Prior to his meeting, Lim told reporters following the World Congress of Financial Executives at the Makati Shangri-La yesterday that he would update Moody's on the stock market's performance and inform them of favorable corporate earnings.

"I think the market will reach above the 2,100 index," Lim said. "With the EVAT, we have a good chance of getting upgraded."

Moody's Investor Service in January downgraded the Philippines' foreign currency long-term rating to "Ba2" from "Ba1," citing concerns over the country's fiscal performance.

LIM

But with the expanded VAT in place, the government expects its 2005 budget deficit to come in below the ceiling of P180 billion. It expects P81.4 billion in additional annual revenue from the expanded VAT.

The stock market is another source of good news, based on the report of the World Federation of Exchanges.

The report said the PSE posted the fastest growth in terms of value turnover during the first nine months of the year.

The WFE said PSE value turnover as of September 2005 jumped 146.7 percent from its year-ago level, the highest among the exchanges included in the review.

The WFE, formerly known as the International Federation of Stock Exchanges, is the umbrella organization of 50 of the world's leading stock market operators.

The WFE report showed that the Philippines bested Poland's Warsaw Stock Exchange (WSE), Austria's Wiener Borse/Vienna Stock Exchange and the Jakarta Stock Exchange.

Lim said he expected the PSE to perform well after PSE-listed companies noted a 27.3-percent hike in profits in the first half of the year.

The WFE report also showed that the market capitalization of PSE-listed companies as of September 2005 went up 28.9 percent from its year-ago level, outperforming its peers in Southeast Asia.

The growth in the PSE market capitalization was higher than the 20.6-percent growth posted by the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET), the 20.5-percent surge chalked up by the JSX and the 7.5-percent hike noted by Bursa Malaysia during the same nine-month period.

Investment bank Credit Suisse First Boston, meanwhile, had projected that the country's consolidated public sector debt would fall to 67.1 percent of gross domestic product in 2010 from a high of 101.3 percent in 2003.

It said this could happen if all provisions of the new VAT law would be implemented, including a rate increase to 12 percent next year from the present 10 percent as well as the imposition of VAT on oil and power.

CSFB said it was "much more bullish" and believed a one-notch foreign currency sovereign rating upgrade could come as early as the second half of 2006.

The bank said a rating upgrade would follow an improvement in the outlook given by credit-rating agencies on the Philippines from "negative" to "stable," which it said could happen either in the latter part of the first quarter or early part of the second quarter of next year.

ElDore eyes listing on PSE

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SYDNEY-BASED ELDORE MINING CORP. LTD. is exploring the possibility of listing some of its shares in the Philippines, said Philippine Stock Exchange president Francis Lim.

Lim said he has met with ElDore and that it was asking about listing and exchange rules.

"It is very preliminary. They have not yet come up with the decision. They want to get listed but they don't know when," Lim said yesterday.

ElDore Mining has a 65-percent interest in a gold project dubbed Nalesbitan Gold project in Camarines Norte, approximately 300 kilometers south of Manila.

This covers 11.46 square kilometers with potentially rich gold and copper prospects.

In June 2005, ElDore Mining entered into an agreement with Sagacity Holdings (New Zealand) Ltd. and agreed to acquire 72 percent of Sagacity's interest in the Nalesbitan Gold Project.

ElDore president Honesto General said the company expects to speed up the exploration of Nalesbitan as the company had just raised A$4 million from the listing of some shares in the Australia Stock Exchange.

ElDore hopes to identify a specific drilling prospect by the middle of next year.

During the 1970s, then major Australian mining company, Renison Goldfields Consolidated Ltd. (RGC), through Gold Fields Asia Ltd. Philippines (GFAL), conducted exploration for gold and base metals throughout Southeast Asia from a base in Manila.

Between 1978 and 1988, GFAL spent over $8 million on exploration and feasibility studies. The feasibility studies led to the development of an open pit-heap leach mining operation that opened in 1989.

Mining was suspended five months into production due to very low gold recoveries, presence of cyanide and swelling capital costs.

Triarx Gold Corp. (Triarx), a Toronto-based publicly listed Canadian exploration company, purchased GFPC from RGC in 1995 and renamed the company ElDore Mining.

Triarx spent approximately $1 million between 1996 and 1997, carrying out detailed geological mapping, geophysical surveys and diamond drilling.

In 1998, Sagacity Partners Ltd. of Sydney, Australia (Sagacity Partners) purchased Triarx's mineral exploration portfolio (EMC in the Philippines) and invested $1.2 million in additional geophysical surveys, and geological mapping to dig for more gold-bearing veins.

With a report from Ronnel W. Domingo

Till death do us par

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

NOBODY IN BUSINESS—CERTAINLY NONE in the financial markets—pressed alarm buttons following the recent death of the longtime power behind the Ayala conglomerate.

Reports said that the Ayala family's matriarch, Mercedes McMicking, died in Spain a few days ago at a ripe old age of 98.

In big business, including the Makati crowd, McMicking in her time was known to wield absolute authority over the Ayala group.

It was said, for instance, that she decided who in the Roxas-Ayala-Zobel clan should take charge of the entire group—the capo de tutti capi—who today are Jaime August Zobel de Ayala (banking, telecoms, etc) and his younger brother Fernando (real estate).

The most famous rumor about the immense power of the late McMicking involved her favorite nephew, the late Enrique Zobel.

In the 1970s, McMicking herself was said to have anointed EZ as the Ayala group's "main man," making the decisions in the multibillion-peso Ayala conglomerate.

That included massive investments in real estate, construction, banking, communications, utilities, and of course, San Miguel Corp.

The Ayala group used to be the biggest single stockholder in San Miguel, but in a startling move in the early 1980s, EZ sold out to Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

Stories vary on the reason behind the EZ move, but one thing was clear in the aftermath: McMicking took power away from EZ.

And she could do that, simply because she personally held the biggest interest in a company called Mermac—as in "Mercedes McMicking."

Mermac, in turn, only controlled the huge Ayala group. Well, to give you an idea, stockholders' equity in the listed Ayala Corp. alone is close to P60 billion. That huge!

Ordinarily, in big business, the passing away of a person as influential and powerful as McMcking should send alarm bells screaming in the financial markets.

Imagine for a moment such a fate befalling one of the country's "taipans," i.e. the few filthy rich Chinese-Filipinos. (Not that I wish any of them ill, though!)

Here in this country, not a few huge companies, either owned by Chinese-Filipinos or Spanish-Filipinos, folded up—or at least ran into full-scale trouble—with the death of the main figures behind the business.

Not in this case of McMicking, at least according to executives, stockbrokers and bankers I talked to, including strong competitors of the Ayala group!

For one, after the death of McMicking's husband, a colonel in the US Army named Joseph, who showed the Ayala group the way to its real estate fortune, the group already put professional managers in key positions.

As for the controlling interest of the late matriarch in the Ayala business empire, word was that McMicking divided it among her grandnephews and grandnieces way, way before her time was due.

In death, after all, it's all par. No rich, no poor. You can't bring it with you.

And so McMicking was not among those tycoons who wrote as the first sentence in their last will and testament, "being of sound mind, I spent it all."

According to Ayala insiders, she already distributed her holdings in the Ayala group to nine people—equally.

They were her grandnephews and grandnieces, meaning, the seven children of Jaime Zobel de Ayala, including Jaime Augusto and Fernando, and the two children of EZ, Mercedes (in Bali doing art) and the formerly troubled Iñigo.

Together, they now control the Ayala conglomerate. Not that they all speak in one voice! At least McMicking made sure they would not fight over what she would leave behind.

I don't know if the taipans can claim the same thing today.

* * *

A WORD of warning to consumers: the advertised cheapest of the cheap airfares for both international and domestic flights are misleading. Believe me. I checked.

In this one-born-every-minute modus operandi, the airline company trumpet giveaway fares, for which they actually make available only a couple of seats.

That's one. Another lookout should be the hidden costs.

One airline, for instance, advertises a fare of P1,734 for Manila-Cebu. This is supposed to be a steal, because the full fare can reach more than P3,000.

This only includes the insurance, fuel surcharge, and such.

When you pay for the fare nevertheless, the airline usually charges an additional P500 or so for the Manila-Cebu flight. For what, you may ask? For things like terminal fees, which also vary depending on the destination.

Thus, actually, the cheap fares are not readily available, and you must be ready to pay for hidden costs. Don't expect too much. It's an advertisement, right?

Shares close higher

From page B1

PLDT and Petron, dealers said.

They said this came despite the appearance in Congress of former election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano who has been accused by the opposition of conniving with President Gloria Arroyo to cheat her way to victory in the May 2004 elections.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 4.27 points to 2,103.42 after trading between 2,097.28 and 2,105.80.

Volume traded reached 462.4 million shares worth P1.06 billion. The broader all-shares index advanced 2.70 points to 1,273.02.

Gainers outnumbered losers 44 to 25 and 64 stocks ended flat.

"This is a mild technical recovery from (Tuesday's) decline. Some investors took that weakness as an opportunity to buy in select counters," said James Lago of Westlink Global Equities Inc.

"The market's critical support is at 2,050. If it falls below that, then it's perhaps time to go on an early Christmas vacation," Lago said.

There were fears that Garcillano's appearance would revive the political furor stoked by the opposition for the ouster of Ms Arroyo but investors seemed hopeful the situation would not worsen.

"The market is expecting only one of two things to happen here. It's either the political noise would continue or a closure of the election scandal could be at hand," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

"It looks like some investors are betting on a closure."

Top-traded PLDT rose P20 to P1,785 tracking its firmer American Depositary Receipts in New York trading overnight.

Petron Corp. gained 15 centavos to P4.60. Similarly briskly traded Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co gained 50 centavos to P33.50. *AFP*

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 7, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	33.5	33	33	178,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59	59	58.5	58.5	98,600
China Banking Corp.	610	610	610	610	620
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.62	690,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	54.5	54.5	54.5	54.5	90,900
International Exch. Bank	21.75	21.75	21.5	21.5	110,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33.5	33	33.5	1,970,200
Philippine National Bank	33	36	33	35.5	360,400
Phil. Savings Bank	36	36	36	36	2,300
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	8,000
Security Bank Corp.	33.5	33.5	33	33.5	7,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	15,700
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	20,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3160	3160	3160	3160	140
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2160	2165	2160	2160	930
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	12,600
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	4,160,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	745	745	735	740	78,040
Ipeople Inc.	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	50,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	863,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1770	1795	1770	1785	222,100
Ivantage Corp.	0.57	0.58	0.56	0.57	700,000
Philweb Corp.	0.016	0.016	0.015	0.016	6,500,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.75	15.75	15.5	15.75	10,400
Manila Electric Co. B	23.75	24.25	23.75	24.25	1,135,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	4,165,000
Petron Corp.	4.45	4.65	4.45	4.6	4,967,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	420,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.6	9.4	9.5	585,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Concrete Aggregates A	6	6	6	6	26,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.7	0.71	1,070,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	50,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.95	3.95	3.8	3.8	524,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	68,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	6,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	24.75	24.75	24.25	24.25	52,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42.5	42	42.5	82,400
Pancake House Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	100,000
RFM Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	50,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	10,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	64	64.5	110,600
San Miguel Corp. B	85.5	86	85	86	41,300
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	10	10	10	10	1,000
Universal Robina Corp.	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	600
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	1,000,000
Ayala Corp.	340	340	335	335	177,640
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	100,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.8	4.8	4.75	4.8	2,326,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.024	4,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.12	2.12	2.1	2.12	1,332,000
APC Group Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	500,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	56,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.89	0.89	0.88	0.89	550,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.4	30,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	5,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	260,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.12	1.12	3,006,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	100,000
CADP Group Corp.	1	1	1	1	20,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.175	0.185	0.175	0.185	630,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	1,830,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.25	1,620,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	67,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49.5	49.5	48.5	48.5	494,600
Global Equities, Inc.	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	100,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	46,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.55	3.55	3.5	3.5	963,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.64	73,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.26	1.26	3,721,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.34	27,820,000
Paxys Inc.	6.1	6.1	6	6	1,752,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.24	1.24	812,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	30,000
SM Investments Corp.	244	246	244	245	252,450
South China Resources Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	10,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	200,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	130,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	180,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	241,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.79	10,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	100,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	7	7	7	7	2,000
Pryce Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	230,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Bella Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.04	5,709,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	50,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.48	1.5	1.48	1.48	475,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	93,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	14	14	13.75	13.75	36,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series I	11	11	11	11	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series J	11	11	11	11	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series K	11	11	11	11	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	11	11	11	11	2,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	11	11	11	11	3,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.75	11	10.75	11	4,800
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	11	11	11	11	800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	11	11	11	11	1,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	11	11	11	11	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	11	11	11	11	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	11	11	10.5	10.5	3,100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	11	11	11	11	6,500
OTHERS					
Far Eastern University	600	600	600	600	3,580
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.4	4,310,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	30,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.06	1.14	1.06	1.1	1,681,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	5,850,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.38	1.36	1.36	602,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	710,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	3,858,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	140,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	50,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.2	6.2	6	6	704,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	13,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	117,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.22	13,980,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	1,620,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	99,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.03	0.029	0.029	118,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	7,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.34	1.4	1.34	1.4	4,632,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.66	1.74	1.66	1.74	11,291,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27.5	28	27.5	28	303,700
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	470,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	37,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	20,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	10,000
Sinophil Corp	0.145	0.145	0.14	0.14	1,030,000

Weaker consumer . . .

From page B1

deficit, followed sharp increases in oil prices, which have broken past the $60-a-barrel level this year.

The uncertainty in the political climate also contributed to the increased interest of Filipinos to save to protect their future, Villegas said.

He noted, however, that while the dwindling spending of Filipino consumers in favor of savings has adverse effects on retail sales, it also had its benefits especially for increasing available funds for loans.

Higher funds for loans would in turn help boost local investments and compensate for the measly foreign direct investments that the Philippines attracts.

Villegas said that while in the past years total savings as a percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) stood at only 20 percent and below, the figure has gradually increased to above 20 percent.

He said the decline in consumer demand would only be felt in the short term, explaining that the expected better economic climate in the medium to long term would again boost consumer spending habits.

He cited moves of mall owners like Henry Sy and the Gokongweis to continue building malls as indicative of their confidence that consumer spending would grow in the years ahead.

CURRENCIES

December 7, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.848320	1.000000	53.9730
Japan	Yen	0.007024	0.008280	0.4469
United Kingdom	Pound	1.477520	1.741700	94.0048
Hongkong	Dollar	0.109404	0.128966	6.9607
Switzerland	Franc	0.649506	0.765638	41.3238
Canada	Dollar	0.733080	0.864155	46.6410
Singapore	Dollar	0.503364	0.593366	32.0257
Australia	Dollar	0.639036	0.753296	40.6576
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.250366	2.652731	143.1759
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.226213	0.266660	14.3924
Brunei	Dollar	0.501876	0.591611	31.9310
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000101	0.0055
Thailand	Baht	0.020516	0.024184	1.3053
UAE	Dirham	0.230974	0.272272	14.6953
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.178800	63.6234
Argentina	Peso	0.283246	0.333890	18.0210
Brazil	Real	0.391238	0.461191	24.8919
Denmark	Kroner	0.134230	0.158230	8.5401
India	Rupee	0.018390	0.021678	1.1700
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.224423	0.264550	14.2786
Mexico	New Peso	0.081401	0.095955	5.1790
New Zealand	Dollar	0.607723	0.716384	38.6654
South Africa	Rand	0.135384	0.159591	8.6136
Korea	Won	0.000820	0.000967	0.0522
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025385	0.029924	1.6151

PLDT drops bid for Bayantel, Dream TV

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE Telephone Co. is walking away from two potentially promising acquisitions—Bayan Telecommunications Inc. and Philippine Multi-Media System Inc., operator of Dream Satellite TV—due to irreconcilable pricing differences.

It appears that 2005 is not a good year for acquisitions for the PLDT group. Its biggest shareholder, First Pacific Co. Ltd., had wanted to buy Del Monte Pacific, but its bid was foiled last week by the Campos-San Miguel Corp. group.

PLDT's discussions with Bayantel and Dream Satellite went on for months during the year before the telecom giant decided to drop its bid.

PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno confirmed that the company had decided not to pursue talks with the Lopez family on the purchase of Bayantel, a niche fixed-line player saddled with debts.

"We had decided to pull out from the talks with Bayantel because of pricing differences," said the PLDT president.

Bayantel's asking price, according to the PLDT chief, was quite a sum considering its financial status.

Sources said that PLDT's board of directors, in a recent meeting, also agreed not to chase after Dream Satellite TV of the telecom giant's former owner, Antonio Cojuangco.

Owning Dream Satellite would have been the key for PLDT to finally pursue its tie-up with US direct-to-home provider Echostar. Now, PLDT has to negotiate with other groups owning a franchise to operate a direct-to-home satellite.

Nazareno declined to comment on the pending discussions over Dream Satellite. What people could be talking about, he said, could just be "posturings" among those involved.

A source said that Cojuangco was upset with PLDT's decision after having negotiated with officials of his former company for months.

In the third week of September, the two parties came close to signing a memorandum of agreement that would have paved the way for the transfer of ownership.

But Cojuangco's group, according to the sources, changed its mind in accepting PLDT's offer of $22 million for the ownership of Dream Satellite TV and, soon after, opened a new round of negotiations.

As the weeks passed, the possibility of PLDT and Dream Satellite coming to terms on the valuation dimmed. Last Friday, Cojuangco's Dream Satellite and ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. signed an exclusive deal on the pay-television business.

The deal will give Dream Satellite TV access to ABS-CBN programs while SkyCable will use Cojuangco's set-up boxes and other satellite technology to make the Lopez-controlled cable TV business less vulnerable to signal theft.

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End-November

From page B1

The BSP dips into its foreign reserves to supply dollars to the spot foreign exchange market whenever there is a need to quell speculative attacks against the local currency. A large GIR build-up thus provides psychological support for the peso by improving the BSP's war chest at the foreign exchange market.

Tetangco said the current GIR level was three times the Philippines' short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.6 times based on residual maturity. Short-term debt based on residual maturity pertains to outstanding short-term external debt on original maturity plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

Analysts said the country's GIR level remained at a healthy level and this was helping fuel the peso's strengthening against the dollar since November.

Despite a rising trade deficit partly due to the skyrocketing oil import bill, the country is seen to continue benefiting from strong foreign exchange inflows particularly from the remittances of overseas Filipino workers as well as the rebound in foreign investments.

As the global economy appeared headed for a' slowdown this year, the BSP has factored in the possibility that the country could not rely on export earnings alone to generate foreign exchange inflows.

But by next year, the BSP expects the GIR level to surge to a new historic high of $18.65 billion despite pressures from maturing debts and a widening trade gap.

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Peso stays at 53 to $1 level despite jitters

BSP says there's enough dollar supply to meet demand

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO REMAINED AT THE 53 to $1 level yesterday although the foreign exchange market was spooked by bomb threats at foreign embassies in the country.

The peso closed at 53.985 at the Philippine Dealing System yesterday, a bit stronger than the previous day's finish of 53.95:$1 on rumored Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas intervention.

Some traders speculated that the BSP had sold dollars at the open market to stabilize the local currency as security woes prompted some buying of dollars to cover any short positions.

The resumption of a congressional inquiry into the alleged rigging of last year's presidential elections—this time with the elusive election official Virgilio Garcillano testifying—also prompted some traders to hold on to their US dollars.

Inflows from overseas Filipino workers ahead of the Christmas holidays remained strong, allowing the peso to stay at the 53 level.

The local currency traded at a range of 53.850 to 54.020 and averaged at 53.925, while the volume of transactions rose to $576 million from the $508.5 million turnover last Tuesday.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco said the peso was stable because there was enough supply to cover the demand for dollars.

There is good two-way liquidity," said Tetangco.

In the meantime, local police beefed up security at several embassies in Manila yesterday after they reported receiving bomb threats through separate phone calls, and a day after the U.S. Embassy closed due to "plausible threat information."

In a separate incident, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a building owned by the family of President Gloria Arroyo's husband early Wednesday.

Dealers said the foreign exchange market might consolidate near current levels as many traders preferred to stay on the sidelines given the political and security concerns.

But some traders are confident that the peso would shrug off the adverse impact of political developments and security concerns in the coming days.

A currency trader said there was still room for the peso to continue its strengthening because of the holiday flows.

In the secondary market for Philippine treasury bonds, yields continued to rise on concerns over higher-than-expected inflation in November, and political worries. The five-year Treasury bond yield was quoted at 9.989 percent compared to Tuesday's 9.825 percent, according to the Money Market Association.

A MAN changes his $100 bill to Philippine pesos at a money changer in Manila. The increasing remittances from OFWs continue to boost the peso.

Biofuels bill up for expansion of coverage

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER GETTING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' nod, the biofuels bill is now being pushed for passage before the end of the year, with incentives for biodiesel industry players to be added to the House version of the bill.

In an interview during yesterday's Asia Biofuels Conference, House bill author and Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri said the passage of the bill, now being deliberated in the Senate, would serve as a good Christmas gift not only to existing and potential industry players but also to Filipino farmers.

"If we don't approve the biofuels bill soon, all our efforts will be for naught. I hope our friends in the Senate can really jump-start this piece of legislation," he told reporters.

He said the bill, before being passed into law, would have new additions, including a provision containing an incentive package for the biodiesel industry.

The House version of the bill, although designed for the entire biofuels industry, focused mainly on bio-ethanol and said very little about biodiesel.

Zubiri assured biodiesel players that they would be included in the law.

"We'll support B1 or diesel with a 1-percent (coco methyl ester) blend. It'll get the same incentives as those for ethanol," he said.

Under the approved House bill on biofuels, investors will be entitled to fiscal incentives, including exemption from duties on the importation of equipment and machinery.

They will also be given non-fiscal incentives, including the classification of all ethanol production and blending investments as "pioneering" or "preferred areas of investment."

Bio-ethanol producers will likewise be granted easier access to financing from the Development Bank of the Philippines, Land Bank of the Philippines and Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corp.

The bill requires the Tariff Commission to create a tariff line for bio-ethanol fuel.

To help legislators better understand the biofuels industry, Zubiri said special training sessions would be held for senators and their staff.

New BOI system boosts investment registration

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INVESTMENTS APPROVED DURING the first two months of the Board of Investments' simplified registration procedure reached P36.63 billion, according to Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez.

Hernandez, who is also the BOI's managing head, said the 42 proposed investments given tax perks were expected to create 10,403 jobs.

The biggest project approved under the new system was the P1.54-billion float glass manufacturing venture of Asahi Glass Philippines Inc.

Among the latest projects granted incentives were a P38.93-million call center operation and a P6.2-million artworks production business for theme parks.

Owtel (Ph) Inc., a 67-33 joint venture between Filipino and American partners, is putting up a call center at the One San Miguel building along San Miguel Avenue and Shaw Boulevard in Pasig City.

Expected to create 230 jobs, Owtel's venture would provide inbound customer service and outbound telemarketing calls for local customers as well as those in Hong Kong and the United States.

Themebuilders Inc., which is 60 percent Filipino-owned and 40 percent Dutch-owned, would conceptualize, design and make artworks including dioramas, sculptures and scenic artworks for museums, aquariums, amusement parks, hotels, malls, and recreational facilities.

Themebuilders' project would create 181 jobs and its total production was geared for export.

Both projects were granted non-pioneer status, which entitles them to four-year tax holidays and other fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

Hernandez said that with the SRP's one-day project evaluation process, the BOI was able to immediately approve and register project applications involving straightforward investment activities that conform with the agency's existing policies and rules.

He explained that under the SRP, which was started in early October, the entire registration process—from evaluation to issuance of registration papers—could be completed within three working days for the "straightforward projects" and 10 working days for projects that require the exercise of the BOI's discretion on specific issues.

"This is a marked improvement from the previous process where the evaluation and approval of applications take 20 working days, while the issuance of certificate of registration eats up an additional 30 to 90 days depending on how soon the pre-registration legal documents are submitted by applicant firms," he said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		La Salle - Ateneo Dream Game				Sentro	La Salle - Ateneo Dream Game					Big News	Rockstar (Result Show)	Inq TV		Billboard On-Air
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Kampanerang Kuba	Panday	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season 3)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		The Amazing Race Family Edition		Amazon		The Outer Limits (Season IV)		Gamemax	Hollywood's Greatest Stunts	David Blaine Vertigo		David Blaine Frozen In Time		The Contender	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Coop's Confused Christmas		Xiaolin Showdown	Teen Titans	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	Coop's Confused Christmas		Justice League	Static Shock	Xiaolin Showdown	Teen Titans
Cinema One		Ulilang Anghel				Aishete Imasu				Videoke King		Panday Ang Alamat Ng Panday				Burlesk King Daw O...	Wonderland		
Cinemax	Deconstructing Sarah			Young at Heart				Boiling Point			Hercules And Lost Kingdom			A Slight Case Of Murder					
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		Your World Today	
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia		Hour China		Wild Discovery		Blueprint For Disaster		Extreme Machines		Ultimates		Austin Stevens		Lost Worlds		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie Mcguire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Motorsport Asia	Acc / Big Ten Chall. Miami (Fl) Vs Michigan				Table Tennis '05 Killerspin	Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	Table Tennis '05 Killerspin	Acc / Big Ten Chall. Miami (Fl) Vs Michigan				X-Games Files '04	Sportscenter Asia
ETC		GBB	Knock First	1 Hr. Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Good Morning Miami	Commited	American Dreams		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation: God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil, Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr. Mitch Pacwa		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Encantadia	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Family Law II		Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Midsomer Murders: Dark Autumn			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Family Law II (11:25PM)
HBO					Doin' Time On Planet Earth			Joe's Apartment (6:10 PM)			Bad Apple			Troy					Patch Adams (11:40PM)
IBC 13							IBC Express Balita	Sea Games											
JackTV	Dr. Katz	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Beat The Geeks	Extreme Days				Cinematech	Family Guy	Mad TV		Reno 911	Crank Yankers	South Park	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Hip-Hop Nation	Ride With Funk Master Flex	WWE Velocity	
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		E! True Hollywood Story		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	MAV: Simple Plan Crazy	MTV Cribs	That MTV Chart Show		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc		MTV Hits				MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News		Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Megastructures		Marine Machines		Catastrophe		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Megastructures		Explorations Powered Duracell	
NBN				New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Sea Games				Teledyaryo				Network Forum		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blue's Clues/ What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold	My Life As A Teenage Robot/ Right On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			OA Sa Puso				Awit Ni Cecilia		Sityo Ang Batas, Nuh Ang Katarungan				Dyesebel				Col. Billy Bibit		
Qtv		Endless Christmas (Natividad Sin Fin)	Mariana (Sin Pecado Concebida)	Cabecita	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Golden Bowl	Star	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		All In	News On Q	Women's Desk		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		The Ultimate Fighter		Revelations		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
SBN 21		New Life TV Shop						Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Music Video		Shepherd's Voice	
Solar Sports		FIVB World Champ Cup Women's Event: Chn vs Pol				CWS Ep 49-2005	NBA Game Celtics @ Rockets					Sportsdesk		NBA Game Bucks @ 76ers					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus	NBA Game: Dallas @ Indiana					Party Poker.com World Open 2005				Slipstream		NFL 2005 New York Jets @ New England						Celebrity Poker Tournament 2	
Star Movies		The Ticket (3:15 PM)	Eve's Christmas (3:45 PM)				Reality Check			Underworld				Six Days Seven Nights			Body Count (10:40PM)		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	Scrubs	8 Simple Rules	Miss World/ John Lennon Working Class Hero		The Apprentice		Friends	Scrubs
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monster		UAAP				Batman Beyond	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Contender		Alas (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives		News Central	Oprah		Salt

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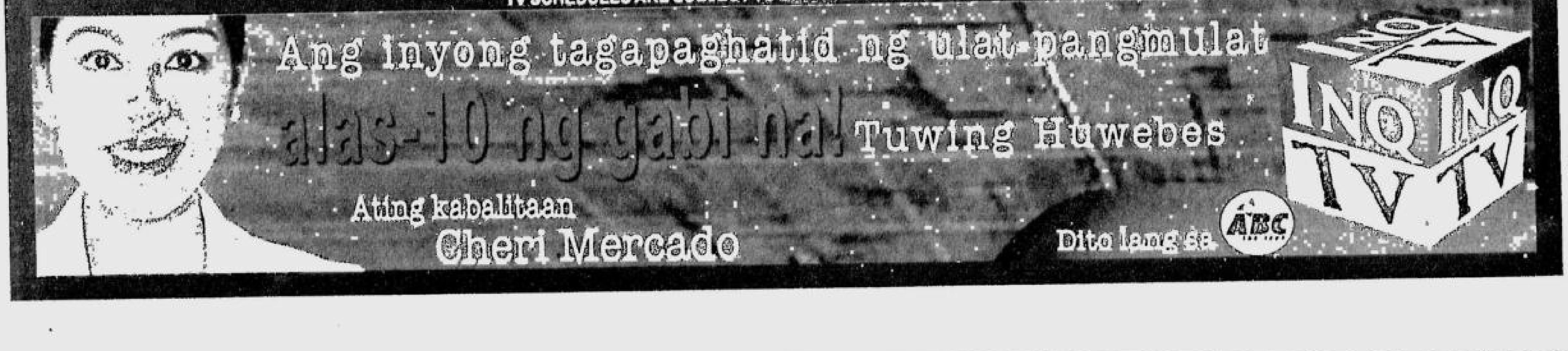

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Mango exports expected to increase by 20% this year

Production rising, demand overseas strengthening

By Christine A. Gaylican

AFTER POSTING A DECLINE this year, the country's fresh and processed mango exports are expected to recover and post a 25-percent increase next year.

Marsman Drysdale Foods Corp. president Clemente D. Garrucho said local exporters of fresh and processed mangoes were seeing brighter prospects next year. Production, he said, was seen to increase to meet rising demand in the export market.

Garrucho said that the fairly good weather in the last quarter of the year would help improve harvests next year.

The Philippines is the largest supplier of fresh mangoes to Japan with a market share of 65 percent, followed by Mexico with 28 percent and other sources, 7 percent.

The Philippine mango industry has been adversely affected by stringent food safety and health standards imposed last year by Japan, its major export market.

Garrucho noted that fresh mango exports to Japan declined by 20 percent this year due to this. He is, however, optimistic that shipments to this market would substantially improve next year as local exporters were able to meet the standards set by Japanese authorities.

The mango industry's performance is expected to be further boosted by the rising demand in other markets, including Hong Kong, China, Korea, United States, Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

Philippine Mango Exporters Board president Roberto Amores said in another interview that the country was the world's sixth largest producer of mangoes.

The mango industry supports 2.5 million Filipino farmers nationwide, he said in a report.

Government authorities are eyeing higher exports of carabao mangoes with the development of the controlled atmosphere technology (CAT).

Citing its initial research findings, the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Post-Harvest Research and Extension said CAT could help enhance the marketability of carabao mangoes, considered as among the world's best mango varieties.

The bureau said the technology could prolong the shelf life and maintain the quality of the produce.

Citing figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAS) said the country in 2003 accounted for only 3.9 per cent of the world's fresh mangoes exports, equivalent to 919,000 MT.

Authorities attributed this to the fruit's short shelf life, which diminishes its marketability in foreign markets especially if transported by sea.

Both agencies used a CAT storage system having a one-ton capacity to store mangoes used in the study.

The comparison of these mangoes with those stored under normal conditions showed the technology was effective in enhancing the quality of such produce.

"Storage trials also verified that CAT can extend the shelf life of mangoes to 28 days," BPRE said.

The agency clarified, however, that further research in commercial shipment of carabao mangoes was needed to validate its initial findings.

MBTC declares cash dividends

METROPOLITAN BANK & TRUST Co. DEclared another 2 percent cash dividend payable to stockholders of record as of Dec. 8.

This translates to a dividend of P0.40 per share or a total of P653 million to be taken out of the bank's accumulated profits.

The bank has total outstanding shares of 1,633,650,950 with a par value of P20.00 per share. Payment date will not be later than Jan. 6, 2006.

The dividend declaration brings to 5 percent the total cash dividends the bank has declared for the year for a total cash value of P1.6 billion. Last year, the bank declared a 4 percent in cash dividends, amounting to P1.3 billion.

The bank posted an income of P3.2 billion for the first nine months of 2005, representing a 21-percent increase from year-ago level. This was due to higher interest income, deposit and loan business, and a 14-percent growth in income from trust operations.

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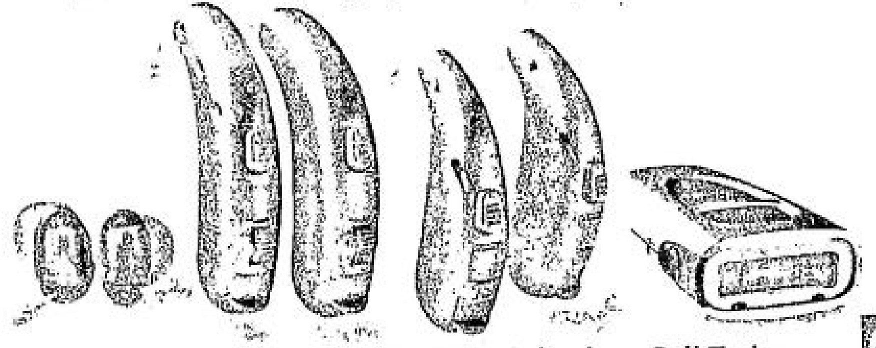

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1.0MM - 4.99MM	6.375	6.500	6.625
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10.0MM and up	7.000	7.250	7.500

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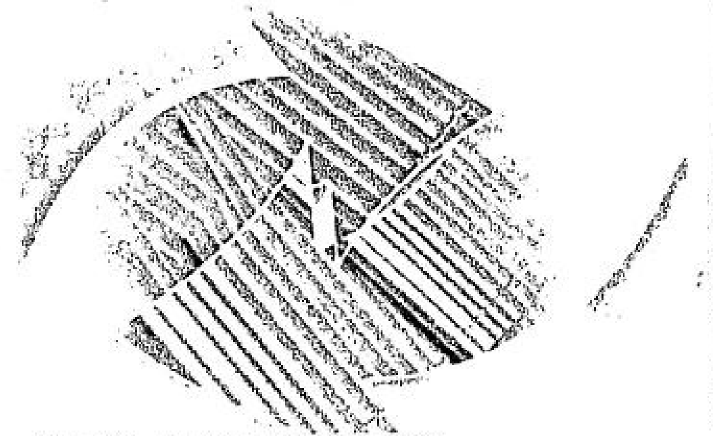

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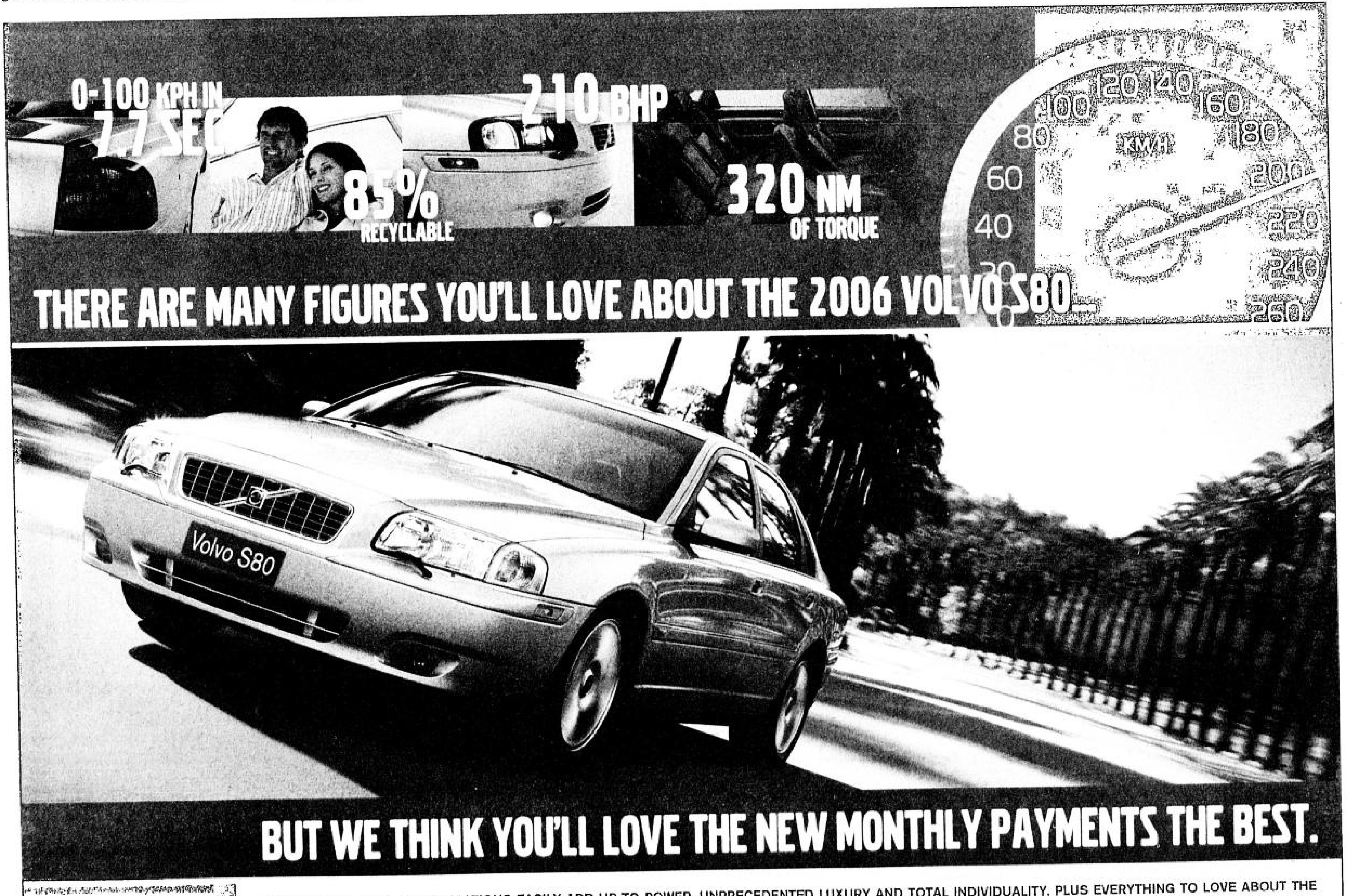
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Up-close and personal with
AAI chairman Rico Brizuela

Rico Brizuela

Uldarico "Rico" V. Brizuela, the co-founder and moving force behind Airlift Asia, Inc. (AAI), is one who doesn't balk at obstacles and challenges. This is the reason why he has successfully steered the country's leading 100-percent Filipino-owned airfreight forwarding company to the top.

Brizuela started AAI from the ground up with a business partner in 1981. And though a new player, AAI immediately gained the respect of the freight forwarding industry with Brizuela being elected as a director of the Aircargo Forwarders of the Philippines, Inc. (AFPI), at that time an association of the top 50 freight forwarders in the country. He was one of the youngest officials ever to hold that post.

Brizuela was then elected president for two terms from 1992 to 1994. He then remained as a director of AFPI until 1998.

AAI's initial operations ran smoothly under Brizuela's helm. It was even able to surpass the goals it set for itself that time. Come 1983, however, the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr. plunged the country into political strife and caused many companies to close down.

This obstacle did not deter Brizuela, though. In fact, he saw it as a perfect opportunity for AAI to reposition itself in the market.

Needless to say, AAI survived and even became a stronger and more dynamic company.

This is why when the big foreign players started coming during the 1990s, AAI was prepared to slug it out with them. In fact, Brizuela saw AAI's being a Filipino company as its competitive advantage in a field dominated by foreign players. He felt that AAI was able to respond to the requirements of its customers in a timely manner because it can decide right away. That is coupled with having world class people catering to the requirements of world class customers.

And while Brizuela sees to it that AAI's employees are highly trained, he likewise honed his expertise in logistics and supply chain management with various special training seminars. He took the Sea Transport Course at the Asian Institute of Management in 1988 and the Ethics and Corporate Governance Seminar at the Ateneo de Manila in January 2004. He also earned a Certificate in Integrated Logistics Management, International Freight Management and Trade Facilitation Management in June 2004 at the Center for Continuing Education of the Ateneo de Manila University Graduate School in partnership with the Federation of Freight Forwarders of the Philippines.

From a one-room office, Brizuela and his able management and staff have turned AAI into a multi-million-peso business.

And as AAI marks its 25th year in the business this 2005, Brizuela dreams of even bigger things for the company. He wants AAI to make its presence felt in the international scene.

With a driven and hardworking man like Brizuela at the helm, there is no doubt that AAI would fly even higher in the years to come.

> And as AAI marks its 25th year in the business this 2005, Brizuela dreams of even bigger things for the company

THE AIRLIFT ASIA NETWORK

From its humble beginnings in a one-room office across the domestic airport, Airlift Asia, Inc. (AAI) has now grown into a multi-million-peso business, multi-affiliated organization, with both domestic and international cargo freight forwarding, warehousing, customs brokerage, and third party logistics operations. Its growing family includes the following companies:

AIRLIFT ASIA CUSTOMS BROKERAGE INC

Airlift Asia, Inc. (Cebu)

Airlift Asia, Inc. (Cebu) started its operations in 1982 to cater to the forwarding and logistical requirements of export / import manufacturing companies in Cebu and the rest of Visayas and Mindanao. Located in the Mactan Economic Processing Zone (MEPZ), AAI (Cebu) is a one-stop-shop freight solutions provider that offers the following services: international airfreight and seafreight forwarding; domestic freight forwarding; customs brokerage; trucking; warehousing; packing and crating; third party logistics; customs bonded trading warehouse; project cargo handling; local distribution; and insurance.

ASIA OCEAN SERVICES INC

Asia Ocean Services, Inc.

Asia Ocean Services, Inc. was organized in 1995 specifically to cater to the seafreight logistics requirements of AAI's clients. Its worldwide affiliation with different agents and its strong working relationship with reputable shipping lines contributed to its growth throughout the years. The company offers seafreight solutions to customer's transport needs at the least cost, ensuring effective and efficient customer service handling, and a worry-free transport of cargo until its delivery to the final destination. Asia Ocean Services, Inc. continuously promotes excellence and professionalism among its personnel. In November 2000, AOSI was certified to ISO 9000 by the SGS Yarsley International Certification Services Limited of the U.K. On February 14, 2003 AOSI was upgraded to ISO 9001:2000.

AIRLIFT ASIA CUSTOMS BROKERAGE INC

Airlift Asia Customs Brokerage Inc.

Airlift Asia Customs Brokerage, Inc. (AACBI) services the increasing brokerage requirements of the customers of the AAI Group of Companies. It caters primarily to the semiconductors, electronics, telecommunications, and commercial companies. It provides efficient customs clearance and on-time delivery of cargoes 7 days, 24 hours and 365 days a year. AACBI continuously promotes excellence and professionalism among its personnel. In January 2002 AACBI was certified to ISO 9001:2000 by the SGS Yarsley International Certification Services Limited of the U.K.

AAI LOGISTICS INC

AAI Logistics, Inc.

AAI Logistics, Inc. (AAILI) was conceived to serve the growing needs by the AAI Group of Companies' customers for Third Party Logistics or Supply Chain Management operation. Its Customs Bonded Trading Warehouse (CBTW) operations allow both the manufacturing companies and their suppliers to avail of just-in-time delivery of goods, outsourced warehouse management inventory and control, and reduction in warehouse overhead cost. AAILI provides full Third Party Logistics capability on a 7-day, 24-hour and 365-day service.

A2Z LOGISTICS

A2Z Logistics, Inc.

A2Z Logistics, Inc. is a duly-registered Ecozone Facilities Enterprise in PEZA's Mactan Economic Zone. It has made its presence felt in the Cebu logistics market. It provides Third Party Logistics or Vendor Managed Inventory capabilities to PEZA locators and their suppliers. The operations of A2Z Logistics allow both the manufacturing companies and their suppliers to avail of just-in-time delivery of goods, outsourced warehouse management inventory and control; reduction in warehouse overhead cost and various administrative and governmental documentary requirements.

J.I.T. FREIGHT INC FUJITSU

JIT Freight, Inc.

JIT Freight, Inc. is a joint venture company between Airlift Asia Inc and Fujitsu Philippines Inc. It was formed to serve the total distribution and warehousing needs of all products of Fujitsu and its affiliate companies. JIT has competent personnel trained in warehousing and inventory control management. This capability is further enhanced by its proximity to its mother company, Airlift Asia, Inc. whose logistical support is always available for any immediate requirement.

FREIGHT ASSURANCE AGENCY, INC

Freight Assurance Agency, Inc

Freight Assurance Agency, Inc. was organized to serve the insurance needs of the AAI Group of Companies and their customers. The corporation acts primarily as an insurance agent, providing non-life insurance products such as Fire and Allied Perils, Comprehensive Motor Car, Cargo Marine, Floater / Inland Marina, Surety Bonds, and Miscellaneous Casualty (Comprehensive General Liability) among others. FAAI is also capable of providing other insurance products and services that its customers may require.

AAI TRAVEL AND TOURS

AAI Travel & Tours

AAI Travel & Tours is a subsidiary of AAI that serves its clients with reasonable rates, excellent service and the best options available. Its products and services include itinerary planning, airline reservation and ticketing, tours planning and packaging, special interest tours, conventions, conference, exhibit, and incentive travel. Its travel products include international and local air tickets, Eurail passes, luxury cruises and hotel accommodations, travel insurance, and car rentals. It also assists in passport renewals; amendments and extensions; authentication of documents by NSO; various immigration documentations; VISA applications; tax exemption certificates; and other documentations necessary for travel.

AAI BUSINESS PRO INC

AAI Business Pro, Inc.

AAI Business Pro, Inc. was established this year to provide contracted service operations, manpower deployment and management in semiconductor and electronic manufacturing. It provides service support to manufacturing and other support organizations; third party warehouse operations that include the receiving of warehouse materials, systems operations, inventory cycle counts, stocking, material issuances, and physical inventory custodianship; and management and operations of specific functions in an organization. Its customers include AMKOR Technology Phils., Inc. and Sun Power in Laguna Technopark.

AAI CHARITY FOUNDATION, INC

AAI Charity Foundation, Inc.

AAI Charity Foundation, Inc. (AAICFI) is a private, non-profit, non-stock corporation that serves as the philanthropic and social development /welfare arm of the AAI Group of Companies. AAI and its affiliates fulfill their corporate social responsibility (CSR), good governance, and best practices functions through this Foundation. Its main CSR programs lie in the field of education and youth development where a substantial portion of its funds and resources are channeled. AAICFI's "RVB Scholarship Grant" has sent about 40 students to enroll at the Ateneo de Naga University in Bicol.

Congratulations Airlift Asia, Inc. on your 25th anniversary!

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Airlift Asia marks 25 years of Filipino success

AIRLIFT Asia, Inc. (AAI) honors the success of the Filipino spirit as it marks another milestone in its colorful history

AIRLIFT ASIA INC

The country's foremost local freight forwarding services celebrates its 25th anniversary with a uniquely Filipino Fiesta celebration this December 8, highlighting the values and dedication of the people who have contributed to its success. Special awards will be handed out to employees who have been with the company for 10, 20 and 25 years.

"Airlift Asia is what it is today because we believe that despite the size of our company, we have retained the essence of a small company," says AAI chairman Rico V. Brizuela. "We have worked together as if we still had to carry each package ourselves. We believe that the success or failure of the company lies on each one's capacity to fulfill his duties."

AAI, which started out with just a one-room office and a staff of only ten employees in 1981, has now grown into a multi-million-peso business in an industry that has become one of the pillars of trade in the country. Today, it employs 500 people in its head and satellite offices in Cebu and Davao, with about 14 percent of them having a service record of ten years or more.

"Our staff comes to work everyday with the dedication and commitment to render the best work possible. They have what we Filipinos call 'malasakit' and this has allowed us to persevere and grow. It has made us strive everyday towards our vision," Brizuela said.

AAI's commitment to quality service has been rewarded with an ISO 9001 certification and the distinction of being one of the top ten agents of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) for several years. It is the only Filipino-owned airfreight forwarding company to have gained this recognition.

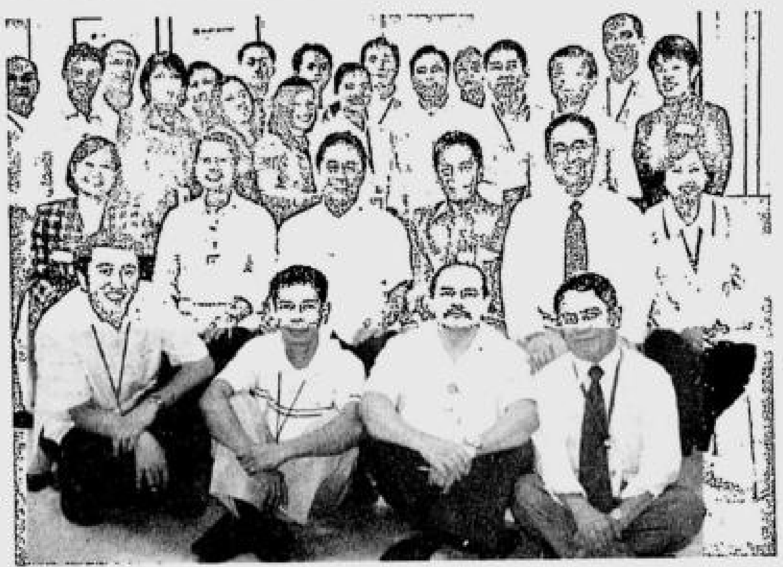
The company is among the top 1,500 corporations in the Philippines in terms of sales revenue and profitability. It now has several affiliates which include Airlift Asia Customs Brokerage, Inc.; AAI Logistics, Inc.; JIT Freight, Inc.; A2Z Logistics, Inc.; Asia Ocean Services, Inc.; Freight Assurance Agency, Inc.; AAI Business PRO and AAI Charity Foundation, Inc.

AAI is consistently one of the top ten agents of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). AAI is also the exclusive agent in the Philippines of the World Air Cargo Organization (WACO). It is also a member of the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines (SEIPI), Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines.

This year, AAI added another feather to its cap with a TAPA-A (Technology Asset Protection Association) certification.

AAI likewise recognizes the support that its clients have given it throughout the years. It will hand out special citations to its long-standing customers during its anniversary celebration.

"We couldn't have come this far without the trust and support that they continue to give us," Brizuela says.



AAI's present clientele include Amkor Technology Phils.; Smart Communications; Analog Devices Phils.; SCA Hygine Products Corp.; Maxim Integrated Productcs, Inc.; Fuji Xerox Phils.; Toshiba Information Equipment Phils., Inc.; Integrated Microelectronics, Inc., SCA; Intel Phils.; Nidec; Marubun/Arrow; Fujitsu; ITW Meritex; Ford Motor Company; Wellcom; Pillsburry; Mazda; Nokia; Pepsi; and Toyota.

And despite all its achievements, AAI never held back in sharing with the community its countless blessings. It continues to be imbued with a strong sense of corporate social responsibility, being a member of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

In the coming anniversary celebration, for example, AAI will donate P1.5 million to the AAI Charity Foundation, its philanthropic arm.

A number of communities have already benefited from the foundations numerous health, education, environment, livelihood, poverty alleviation, and sports development programs and projects.

And as AAI turns another leaf in its colorful history, the company is aiming for an international presence.

"We want to be the first 100-percent Filipino-owned company to offer freight forwarding services outside of the Philippines," Brizuela says. "We are challenging our original vision because our customers are asking us to position ourselves overseas."

The company is among the top 1,500 corporations in the Philippines in terms of sales revenue and profitability

Airlift Asia bags GCCI Platinum Award for Information Technology

Airlift Asia, Inc. (AAI) added another feather to its cap as it received recently the Platinum Award in Information Technology and Communications Infrastructure during the 5th Awards Night of the Global Cargo Carriers, Inc. (GCCI) held at the Westin Philippine Plaza.

The GCCI is an association of the various airlines operating in the Philippines. Since 2001, it has been honoring and giving recognition to the top freight forwarders in the country for their outstanding performance and contribution to logistics management practices.

"One of our trade secrets in achieving efficiency and success here in Airlift Asia is our information technology," said AAI chairman Rico V. Brizuela, who was GCCI's Lifetime Achievement Awardee for 2004.

AAI chief information and technology officer Arsenio A. Gaetos added that AAI's information technology resources are not just investments to support the company's business operations. They are also potent marketing tools that satisfy the needs of customers for quick, on-time, and accurate information as aids for sound decision-making.

FROM left: Airlift Asia, Inc. infrastructure team manager Jose J. Juan, managing director and chief operating officer Alfonso L. Santiago, chief information and technology officer Arsenio A. Gaetos, and applications development team manager Henry P. Parcon proudly hold the GCCI Platinum Award trophy for excellence in information technology and communications infrastructure.

5th CARGO INDUSTRY AWARDS

"At Airlift Asia Inc, we make use of Information Technology to deliver top quality services to our customers," Gaetos said.

So from desktop computers that were used to streamline the company's accounting, sales and production reports in the 1980s, AAI now employs IT for its logistics planning, purchase order management, Vendor-Managed Inventory (VMI), warehousing, and import forwarding.

This helps provide its customers ease in the allocation of cost components, quick and accurate billing, automatic audit track, fast-track payment processing, quick access to information on the status of their transactions, including their billing, shipments and inventory.

AAI has likewise put in place an e-mail facility for internal communications and a web-mail facility that can be accessed by its personnel locally and internationally.

A company website (www.aai.com.ph), meanwhile, provides dynamic and relevant information to its customers.

AAI is the leading Filipino logistics company competing head on with Philippine-based multinationals in the business of local and international freight forwarding. It is the flagship company of the AAI Group of Companies.

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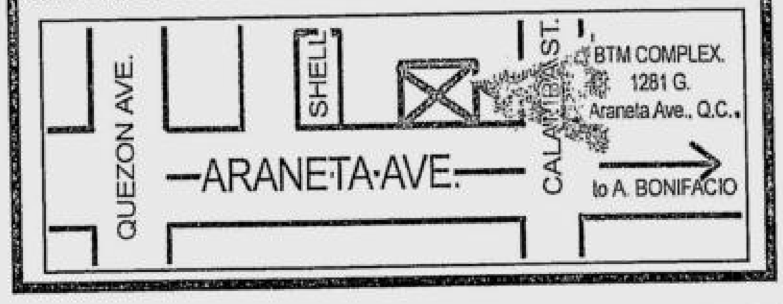

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region V, Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES

The NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) Region V, invites all interested Trucking/Hauling operators to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply of trucking/hauling services for more or less 83,890 MT or 1,677,800 bags Imported Rice covering the following routes:

Source/ Destination	Distance in kms	Lot No.	Volume in MT	Minimum No. of Trucking Requirements	Budget for the Contract (Php)
Tabaco City to:					
Legazpi City	26	1	7,500	3	1,218,750.00
Ligao City	29	2	5,000	2	835,200.00
Libon, Albay	42	3	2,500	2	497,700.00
Cabid-an, Sor.	80	4	5,000	3	1,656,000.00
Bulan, Sor.	153	5	3,000	2	1,589,120.00
Palestina, CSU	86	6	24,235	12	9,795,787.00
Naga City	93	7	11,000	4	4,623,960.00
Libmanan, CSU	117	8	3,000	2	2,070,900.00
Daet, CNO	189	9	17,905	9	12,317,923.80
SUBTOTAL			79,140	39	34,605,340.80
Legazpi City to:					
Ligao City	31.5	10	500	2	87,570.00
Libon, Albay	45.5	11	250	2	53,576.25
Cabid-an, Sor.	54	12	1,095	3	276,137.10
Bulan, Sor.	130	13	250	2	123,500.00
Palestina, Pili	88	14	1,405	3	552,670.80
Naga City	95	15	500	2	209,950.00
Libmanan, CSU	119	16	250	2	119,000.00
Daet, CNO	191	17	500	3	343,800.00
SUBTOTAL			4,750	19	1,766,204.15
OVERALL TOTAL			83,890		36,371,544.95

Prospective bidders must be the registered owners of the minimum number of trucks/units which are preferably "Trucks-for-Hire". Likewise, prospective bidders may bid in any or all specified/preferred routes. For operational expediency, only trucking facilities with a minimum capacity of 400 bags at 50 kgs shall be given priority in trucking services to destination outside the province of Albay.

The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Eligibility Requirements & Bidding Documents	Dec. 07 to 19, 2005	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2. Pre-Bid Conference	Dec. 19, 2005	10:00 AM
3. Deadline for Submission of Eligibility Requirements & Bid Tender Forms	Jan. 05, 2006	9:30 AM
4. Opening of Eligibility Requirements & Bid Tender Forms	Jan. 05, 2006	10:00 AM

The pre-bidding conference and bidding proper shall be conducted at the conference room, 2nd Floor, NFA Office Building, Pier Site, Legazpi City. All trucking operators interested to participate in the bidding must be registered/accredited with NFA. Interested bidders who are not accredited with the NFA or whose registration had already expired may still participate provided they shall apply for accreditation/renewal at NFA Region V.

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of nonrefundable registration fee of P5,000.00.

The eligibility of prospective bidders shall be determined using "Pass/Fail" criteria and shall be determined as either "eligible" or ineligible". If the prospective bidder is rated "Passed" for all the requirements, he shall be considered "eligible". If the prospective bidder is rated "Failed" in any of the requirements, he shall be considered ineligible.

A single stage bidding will be adopted. The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously two (2) envelopes, Envelope A containing the eligibility requirements and Envelope B containing bidding documents. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instructions to Bidders.

Eligibility criteria includes the value of the prospective bidders largest contract within the last five (5) years, completed within the period and similar to the contract to be bid which must be at least fifty-percent (50%) of the budget for the contract to be bid

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Secretariat at Tel. Nos. (052) 820-0018, (052) 480-7015 & Telefax No (056) 480-7900.

(Sgd.) **JOSE B. GUEVARA**
RBAC Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 8 & 15, 2005)

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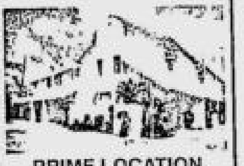

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Lourdes V Enriquez was extrajudicially settled by her heirs per Doc. # 407, Page #03, Book #09, Series of 2005 before Notary Public Atty. Hilarion Omadto of Mandaluyong City
(PDI-Dec 1 8 & 15, 2005)

POWER SECTOR ASSETS & LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Provision of Computer Units Consisting of Sixty-One (61) Desktops and Nine (9) Notebooks Under a Three-Year Lease

1. PSALM, through its 2005 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of SEVEN MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND PESOS (P7,500,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the above project. Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. PSALM now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the provision of computer units consisting of sixty-one (61) desktops and nine (9) notebooks under a three-year lease at PSALM's Offices on Ayala Avenue. Completion of delivery and installation of the Goods shall be within fifteen (15) days from receipt of Notice to Proceed. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. Prospective Bidders should have experience in undertaking at least one (1) project involving lease of computers with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC during the last five (5) years. Prospective Bidders must have at least two (2) computer engineers and three (3) computer technicians as their regular employees all of whom have at least five (5) years experience.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to R.A. 5183. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from PSALM and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below on weekdays, from **December 9-16, 2005 between 10:00AM and 4:00PM.**

   Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation
   Mr. Ruben S. Reinoso, Jr.
   2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City
   Tel: (02)893-8202 Ext. 106; Fax: 840-3698
   E-mail: *rsreinoso@psalm.gov.ph*
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of FIVE THOUSAND PESOS (P5,000.00), either in cash or Cashier's check on weekdays from **December 8–21, 2005,** 10:00AM-4:00PM. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. PSALM will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all those who purchased the Bidding Documents on **January 6, 2006, 2:00 PM** at the PSALM Boardroom, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below not later than **2:00PM of January 19, 2006.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and amount indicated in Section III of the Bidding Documents, BDS. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. **Bid opening shall be on January 19, 2006 2:00PM** at PSALM Boardroom, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
9. PSALM reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **RUBEN S. REINOSO, JR.**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
December 8 and 15, 2005

(PDI--Dec. 8, & 15, 2005)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late RENATO E. RAMOS has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc. No. 15; Page No. 04; Book No. X; Series of 2005 of the notarial register of Notary Public Atty. Macur D. Marohombsar of Pasig City.
(PDI-Dec. 8 15 & 22. 2005)

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845-2334 to 38; 845-2440

Our dearly beloved

RUBY MARTINEZ PUZON

of Makati and Tarlac

Peacefully joined our Lord
on December 6, 2005 at the age of 70.

Her husband **Faustino (Turing) Puzon**; loving children **Arthur** and **Beth, Amy** and **Francis, Albert, Annie** and **Ramon**; grandchildren **Isah, RB, Alexis, Justin, Janine, Julian, Miguel, Gabriella, Isabela**; brother **Dr. Jose (Pepe) Martinez** and wife **Ludy** as well as other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

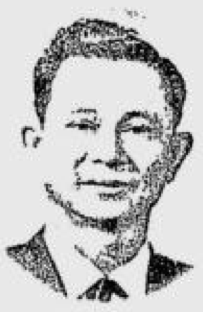
Her remains lie in state at Don Bosco, Charity Chapel in Makati City.

Interment will be at Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque. Interment will be announced later.

In Loving Memory
on the 30th Death Anniversary of

RAFAEL DIOKNO SALCEDO

of Taal, Batangas
July 31, 1911-December 7, 1975



His family requests the reader to pray for the repose of his soul.

But if we have died with Christ, we believe we will also live with Him. Romans 6:8

Our dearly beloved

Hilaria Dizon Lumanlan

Passed away in the Grace of the Lord
on the 5th day of December, 2005.

She is survived by her sister **VERONICA** and preceded in death by her brothers **TEODORO & LEONARDO**; sisters **VICTORIA & LOURDES**. Her relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Good Shepherd Memorial Park, City of San Fernando, Pampanga.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 10, 2005 at the San Fernando Catholic Cemetery, City of San Fernando, Pampanga after the 2:30 p.m. Requiem Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral.

"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel no harm. For you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage..." **Psalm 23:4**

VALLE VERDE SERVICE CENTER INC. (PETRON)
AFTERMATH RESOURCES INC.
ROCAFELA RESOURCES INC.

condole with the family of
the late

MRS. MA. DEL SOCORRO "CORINNA" MUTUC-SARMIENTO

who passed away at the age of 51
on December 5, 2005.

She is survived by her husband, Vitarich Corp. Chairman **Roger M. Sarmiento**; children **Rocco** and **Terri, Nikki, Issa** and **Mika**, and grandson, **Kenshin.**

Her remains were cremated on December 5, 2005.

The wake is scheduled on the following dates:

December 6 to 9, 2005	Capilla dela Virgen Santuario de San Antonio Forbes Park, Makati (Daily Masses at 8:00 p.m.)
December 10, 2005	Requiem Mass, 1:00 p.m. Santuario de San Antonio Parish Church Forbes Park, Makati
December 11 to 13, 2005	Sarmiento Residence Matina, Davao City

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live even when he dies, and no one who lives and believes in Me will ever die."

– John 11:25-26

Our Love for him will never die...

In Memory

of a devoted husband and loving father

SALVADOR S. AREVALO III

on the day of his rebirth to Eternal Life
December 06, 2005.

Holy Masses will be offered at 8:00 p.m. on December 8 and 9 in Loyola Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Parañaque City (Chapel Montmartre).

His family requests relatives, friends and the pious readers to join them in prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

Interment will be at the Manila Memorial Park, Dasmariñas on Saturday, December 10, 2005 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

METRO MANILA

• LAS PIÑAS

FUNERARIA FILIPINAS
187 Real St., Zapote Alabang, Las Piñas: Tels. 873-0507; 873-0024

• MAKATI

DON BOSCO CHAPELS
Pasay Road, Makati City. Tel 894-5932 to 34
FUNERARIA FILIPINAS
865 J.P. Rizal St., Poblacion, Makati City; Tels. 890-3556; 899-8191
LOYOLA MEMORIAL CHAPELS
EDSA cor. Bernardino St., Guadalupe, Makati City; Tels. 895-1011 to 19
MALABED FUNERAL SERVICE
3-A Coronado St., Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City; Tel. 890-63-18
SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO PARISH
Forbes Park, Makati City. Tel. Nos 843-8838/30. Fax No. 843-9223
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGOURI PARISH
Magallanes Village, Makati City: Tels. 852-8228, 852-7284

• MALABON

FLORESCO FUNERAL HOME
219 Gen. Luna St., Concepcion, Malabon, Metro Manila; Tels: 2812983; 2813034; 2810522

• MANDALUYONG

SANTUARIO DE SAN JOSE PARISH
East Greenhills, Mandaluyong City; Telefax 724-4139; 725-2044

• MANILA

DULCE MEMORIAL SERVICES
Jose Abad Santos Ave. cor. Dinalupihan St., Manuguil, Manila
Tels. 712-5102; 741-5125; 741-5133; Fax No. 711-3084
LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
1501 C.M. Recto Ave. cor. T. Mapua, Manila; Tels. 711-6931 to 35; 732-4795; 732-2827
POPULAR MEMORIAL CHAPELS, INC.
2141 Rizal Ave., Sta Cruz, Manila; Tel Nos 254-0867, 254-0839
ST. MARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL
16-15 G. Tuazon cor. Loreto St., Sampaloc, Manila; Tels. 749-3679; 781-1772
UNIVERSAL FUNERAL SERVICE & MEMORIAL CHAPELS
2028 Rizal Ave., Sta. Cruz, Manila; Tels. 493-4458; 493-4540
WELINGTON FUNERAL SERVICES
1511 Gen. Luna St., Paco, Manila; Tel. 302-5447

• MARIKINA

ERIC SANTIAGO MEMORIAL CHAPELS
26 Bayanbayan Ave., Concepcion I, Marikina City; Tels 942-6044; 475-1177
F. SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
9 V. Gomez & 13 V. Gomez St., San Roque, Marikina City, Tels. 646-1725 or 646-1730
LOYOLA MEMORIAL PARK CHAPELS & CREMATORY SERVICES
Loyola Memorial Park, A. Bonifacio Avenue, Tañong, Marikina City
Tels 941-3196 to 98; 941-3676, Telefax 941-3577
PAKET SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
13 V Gomez St., San Roque, Marikina City. Tels. 646-1725; 646-1730

• PARAÑAQUE

HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPELS
Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat Rd., Sucat, Parañaque City;
Tels. 825-1296, 825-1291, Telefax 825-1314
LA FUNERARIA PAZ, SUCAT, INC.
Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat, Parañaque. Tels 820-1592; 825-9947; 825-8835
LINCOLN MEMORIAL SERVICES, INC
Ground Floor, JEMP Bldg., J. Cabarrus cor Monserrat Sts., Phase I, BF Commercial Center, Parañaque, Metro Manila
RIZAL FUNERAL HOMES
8187 Dr A. Santos Ave., Sucat, Parañaque City, Tels 826-1376, 826-9662; (0915) 712-1220

• PASAY

RIZAL FUNERAL HOMES
438 Cementina St., Pasay City. Tels. 831-1204
VERONICA MEMORIAL HOMES
Official NBI Morgue 517-A Arnaiz St., Pasay City. Tels. 831-3797; 844-7846; 843-1801; 845-4838

• PASIG

ARLINGTON EAST THE GARDEN CHAPELS
C. Raymundo St cor Mercedes Ave., San Miguel Ave., Pasig City
Tels. 747-8599, 747-8609 • Telefax 641-1780
FUNERARIA ANGEL QUIOGUE
No 67 Pasig Boulevard Extension, Pasig City; Tels. 641-7909; 641-1735

• QUEZON CITY

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL
12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City; Tels 715-1025, 715-1031; 715-1027
ELYSIUM GARDENS
277 E. Rodriguez Ave., Quezon City. Tels 723-76-51, 723-0484; 723-0335
LA FUNERARIA LAWRENCE BAQUIRAN
#23 Pato St., Project 2, Quezon City, Tel 434-3258
LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
143 G. Araneta Ave. cor. Kaliraya St., Quezon City;
Tels. 749-3806 to 11; 712-3001; 743-6502 or 05
NACIONAL MEMORIAL HOMES
264 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City, Tels. 713-5231 to 35; 714-0867; 714-0868
ST. PETER FUNERAL HOMES
296 Quezon Ave., Quezon City; Tels. 372-5084; 410-9286/87

• TAGUIG-PATEROS

FUNERARIA ANGEL QUIOGUE
M. Almeda St., Pateros, Metro Manila; Tels 642-3010; 633-3602
GARDEN OF MEMORIES MEMORIAL PARK
Calsadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila. Tels. 642-6181 to 82
HERITAGE PARK
Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Tels. (DL) 845-2341 to 42; (TL) 845-2334 to 38 loc. 110/112

PROVINCIAL

• ALBAY

LIGÑON HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS, INC.
Buglong Road, Legaspi City, Tels. (052) 820-0188, 0917-2074152

• BACOLOD

ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
Ground Flr. Rolling Hills Chapel, 27th-Lacson St., Mandalagan, Bacolod City; Tel 433-7132

• BAGUIO

LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
79 Naguillan Rd., Baguio City; Tel. (074) 443-3337; (074) 442-3117

• BATAAN

SANTUARIO GARDEN & CHAPELS
Tallsay Road, Balanga City, Bataan; Tels. (047) 2370643 • 7911766

• BULACAN

FUNERARIA TUASON
Poblacion, San Miguel, Bulacan 3011; Tels. (044) 764-0281; 678-0266; (0917) 895-0603

• CAVITE

FUNERARIA SAMSON
145 Bayan Luma, Imus, Cavite. Tels (046) 471-3375; 471-2675
LA FUNERARIA SAPINOSO
G. Tirona St., Imus, Cavite, Tels. (046) 471-3386, (046) 471-4417; (046) 571-1978

• CEBU

COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City. Tels 231-0721; 231-3192
CEBU ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
Cebu Branch. A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City, Cebu;
Tels. 346-2543, 346-2601

• DAVAO

COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
Camus Ext. cor. J. Abad Santos, Davao City, Tels. (082) 227-1201; 227-1268

• ILOCOS

LA FUNERARIA LAWRENCE BAQUIRAN
#27 Crisologo St., Vigan, Ilocos Sur, Tel. 722-2730, Cell (0917) 5680136; (0917) 5680145

• LAGUNA

SAN RAMON FUNERAL HOMES
2020 Brgy. Dita, Sta. Rosa, Laguna
Tels. (049) 837-5652; 531-4142, Fax (049) 531-4989
ZUASOLA FUNERAL HOMES
Brgy. Del Remedio, San Pablo City, Laguna
Tels (049) 562-1608, 800-2914 Cel No (0917) 5016963

• PAMPANGA

FUNERARIA PANGILINAN
Santo Entierro cor P. Burgos St., Lourdes Sur, Angeles City
Tels. (045) 888-2959 ; (045) 322-5247

• RIZAL

OUR LADY OF PEACE MEMORIAL PARK CHAPEL & SERVICES, INC.
No 6 Carigma St., Antipolo City 1870
Tel. No. 697-0782, 697-0026; 650-7426, Fax 697-2764
F. SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
Guitnang Bayan, San Mateo, Rizal. Tels 649-5949, 942-4460
HOLY GARDENS MEMORIAL PARK
Third Level, Unishoppe Complex, Quezon Ave., Angono, Rizal
Tels 651-1711; 651-0737
MARIAN MEMORIAL CHAPELS
Marcos Hiway, Antipolo, Rizal. Tels 645-1855

• ZAMBALES

DALLUAY MEMORIAL SERVICES
#42 Upper Kalaklan, Olongapo City
Tels. (047) 222-3605, (047) 811-1086 (047) 222-4512; (047) 224-2014
OLONGAPO MEMORIAL PARK
Del Rosario St., Tabacuhan, Sta Rita, Olongapo, Tel No. (047) 223-1892

God has you in his keeping
We have you in our hearts

Nonoy, Rorie,
Nikolai R. Buncio
relatives and friends
remember

Deanna R. Buncio

(April 10, 1971 – December 8, 2003)
on her Second Year of Eternal Life

Masses will be offered today at the following churches:

Immaculate Conception Cathedral *Lantana, Cubao, Quezon City*	6:00am, 7:15am; 8:30am; 9:45am; 11:00am; 4:45pm; 6:00pm; 7:15pm
Christ the King, *E. Rodriguez, Quezon City*	6:30am; 6:00pm
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, *Quiapo, Manila*	9:00am; 5:00pm
Mount Carmel Shrine, *New Manila, Quezon City*	7:00am; 8:00am:10:00am
Parish of the Holy Sacrifice *University of the Philippines, Diliman, Q.C.*	12:00nn; 6:00pm
Sacred Heart Parish, *Kamuning, Quezon City*	6:00am; 7:00am
Sta Maria della Strada, *Katipunan Road, Quezon City*	12:00nn; 6:00pm
St Paul the Apostle, *Chino Hills, California, USA*	7:00am; 8:00am

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Dr. MANUEL T. CASES, SR. Ph. D.

Former Congressman 2nd District of La Union (1945-1965)

was called home to the Lord
on December 6, 2005 at the age of 97.

His loving wife **NINAY**; children and in-laws **Jun & Tes, Vicky & Ki, Cynthia & Nanding (†), Dahl & Ed, Ben & Marla, Norman & Lulu, Gigi & Jon**; grandchildren **Reena, Janice, Rocky, Loric, JP, Cherry, Hanie, Vanni, Erman, Marvin, Martin, Junior, Angeli, Benedict & Armand** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Imperial Chapel, Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City up to early morning of Sunday, December 11, 2005 then will be transferred to the family residence at Cases Blvd., Agoo, La Union.

Interment will be at Agoo Cemetery on Thursday, December 15, 2005 after the 10:00 a.m. Funeral Mass at the Agoo Basilica.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation & Communications
LAND TRANSPORTATION FRANCHISING & REGULATORY BOARD

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2005-054

SUBJECT : **SUPPLEMENTING AND AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR 2005-023 RELATIVE TO THE P2P (AUV/VAN) EXPRESS CONVERSION PROGRAM TO COVER MEGA TAXI, METERED TAXI AND AIRCONDITIONED TAXI SERVICES UNDER THE 2ND PHASE IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE**

The following supplemental and amendatory provisions of Memorandum Circular 2005-023 are hereby rendered to ensure increased stakeholder participation under the P2P (AUV/Van) Conversion Program:

1. AUV vehicles (Toyota FX/Revo, Isuzu Highlander, Mitsubishi Adventure) covered under subsisting **Mega Taxi, Metered Taxi and Air-conditioned Taxi franchises** with year models from 1994 to present shall be considered under the 2nd Phase of the P2P (AUV/Van) Express Conversion Program. However, for those AUV units with year models from 1994 to 1997, the expiry date of the franchises shall coincide with the age maturity of the unit(s) which is thirteen (13) years reckoned from the date of manufacture. The scheduled date of implementation shall be on 07 January 2006.
2. Simultaneous Sale and Transfer with Dropping and Substitution shall not be allowed as provided under Memorandum Circular 2005-047 except those covered under MC 2004-030 Re: Substitution of Taxi and Mega Taxi units.
3. Compliance with the **"All White" Color Scheme** shall be undertaken to coincide with the unit inspection and installation of markings and decals by the 2nd semester of 2006 with the corresponding LTO plate number ending/middle digits, on the following schedule:

	Month	Plate Number Ending
3.1	July 2006	1 & 7
3.2	August 2006	2 & 8
3.3	September 2006	3 & 9
3.4	October 2006	4 & 0
3.5	November 2006	5
3.6	December 2006	6
	Week	Plate Middle Digit
3.7	First	1, 2 & 3
3.8	Second	4, 5,& 6
3.9	Third	7 & 8
3.10	Fourth	9 & 0

4. Compliance with the Schedule and Procedure of Payment of Compromise Conversion Fee amounting to P 30,000.00 shall be undertaken based on the following options and revised schedule:
   - 4.1 Full payment of 30,000.00 upon Filing of Application
   - 4.2 Installment Plan
     - a) Two Partial Payment Scheme
       - P 15,000.00 upon filing of application
       - P 15,000.00 upon inspection of color scheme compliance
     - b) Four (4) Partial Payment Scheme
       - P 7,500.00 upon filing of application
       - P 7,500.00 upon appearance during hearing
       - P 7,500.00 upon release of decision/order
       - P 7,500.00 upon inspection of color scheme compliance.

Other rules and regulations that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Memorandum Circular are hereby repealed and/or modified accordingly.

This Memorandum Circular supersedes any and all issuances inconsistent herewith, and takes effect (15) days following the filing of three (3) copies hereof with the UP Law Center, pursuant to Presidential memorandum Circular No. 11, dated 009 October 1992.

SO ORDERED.

Quezon City, Philippines. DEC. 06, 2005

MARIA ELENA H. BAUTISTA
Chairperson

GERARDO A. PINILI
Board Member

MA. ELLEN DIRIGE-CABATU
Board Member

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation & Communications
LAND TRANSPORTATION FRANCHISING & REGULATORY BOARD

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2005-055

SUBJECT : **SUSPENSION OF FILING OF DROPPING AND SUBSTITUTION, SUBSTITUTION, AND INCLUSION OF UNIT/S**

Considering that the Board is now on the second phase of the Rationalization Program, this Board hereby suspends the filing of Petition/s for Dropping and Substitution, and Substitution of authorized PUB units in Metro Manila, until further Order by this Board. Petition/s and Motion/s for Inclusion are likewise suspended unless for justifiable reasons to be solely determined by the Board. However, grantees of CPC to operate PUB Service in Metro Manila are allowed to file Petition for Dropping of Authorized PUB Units.

This Memorandum Circular supersedes any and all issuances inconsistent herewith, and takes effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

SO ORDERED.

Quezon City, Philippines. DEC. 06, 2005

MARIA ELENA H. BAUTISTA
Chairperson

GERARDO A. PINILI
Board Member

MA. ELLEN DIRIGE-CABATU
Board Member

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation & Communications
LAND TRANSPORTATION FRANCHISING & REGULATORY BOARD

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2005-056

SUBJECT : **LIFTING OF REGIONAL MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2002-03 DECLARING TACLOBAN CITY-CARIGARA AND VICE VERSA AS A MINI-BUS ROUTE IN REGION VIII**

In the interest of the general public and pursuant to the study conducted by the National Road Transport Planning Division, Department of Transportation and Communications, the Regional Memorandum Circular No. 2002-003 dated March 20, 2002 in implementation of DOTC Department Order No. 97-1097, is hereby LIFTED AND SET ASIDE.

Accordingly, PUJ operators who were authorized on the line: **TACLOBAN CITY-CARAGA** and subsequently amended their route to **TACLOBAN CITY-TUNGA or PALO – CARIGARA** are hereby enjoined to file their respective applications for amendment of line to their original route: **TACLOBAN CITY – CARIGARA** and vice versa.

SO ORDERED.

Quezon City, Philippines. DEC. 06, 2005

MARIA ELENA H. BAUTISTA
Chairperson

GERARDO A. PINILI
Board Member

MA. ELLEN DIRIGE-CABATU
Board Member

(PDI - Dec 8, 2005)

DTC

Philippine Transmarine Carriers, Inc. (POEA-110-SB-100301-R) is in urgent need of the following positions for immediate deployment:

FOR THE OFFSHORE FLEET

CHEF MANAGER

Please apply in person or email resume with relevant documents to:

IAN DIWA / ELVIE ELOPRE

Tel. No. : (02) 898-1111 local 1610 / 1619

Email: ian.diwa@stena.com / elvira.elopre@stena.com

PHILIPPINE TRANSMARINE CARRIERS –Northern Marine Management

6/F First Maritime Place, 7458 Bagtican St.,
San Antonio Village, Makati City

SERVIECON INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION

POEA License No.: 500-LB-101602-R
2/F Ganare Bldg., 2241 Taft Avenue, Malate, Manila, Philippines
Tel: 5284187 • 5284190 • 4006441 Fax: 528-4224
Email: admin@servicon.com

K2 RECRUIT PTE LTD, Singapore is in need of:

CUSTOMER SERVICE OFFICERS

The appointee is required to attend to walk in as well as customers over phone. She must possess extensive product knowledge and ensure that all transactions are properly documented in the house keeping system

Requirements:

A degree in mass communications or equivalent • Single, female, aged 25 – 35 years old • Minimum of 3 years' related work experience in customer service preferably in a telecom customer service environment • Pleasant personality with excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

An attractive remuneration package will be offered to successful applicants. To apply, bring along 2 copies of resume with recent photo and attend a preliminary interview either on Dec 8, 2005 (9 am to 3 pm), Dec 9, 2005 (1pm – 3pm) and Dec 11, 2005 (9 am – 3 pm). Please call our office to confirm your attendance.

For manpower pooling only. No fees to be collected. Beware of illegal recruiters.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation & Communications
LAND TRANSPORTATION FRANCHISING & REGULATORY BOARD

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) invites all qualified agencies to apply for eligibility and to bid for the procurement of security services, consisting of:

1. Numbers Needed 13 Security Guards for Metro Manila
   24 Security Guards for Regional Posting
2. Scope of Work
   - a. Areas to be serviced: all buildings, structures, project sites, exhibit site, motor vehicles within the LTFRB compound and its perimeter;
   - b. Protect life of LTFRB officials and employees, and other properties in the LTFRB Offices and premises;
   - c. To provide One (1) Unit, (24-hours, 7 days per week) Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and sixteen (16) Monitoring Camera System in strategic areas for all LTFRB Offices and Installations. Tapes shall be preserved and stored for 1 month before reuse;
   - d. Up-to-date security paraphernalia such as metal wand-detectors (One (1) unit/region and two (2) units at Central Office) bomb/drug-sniffing K9 (optional as needed), adequate crowd control materials (as needed), F/As for all SGs, etc.
3. Other requirements will be provided in the Bid Documents.
4. Approved Budget of the Contract (ABC) is Php 7.0 million.
5. The duration of the Contract is 12 months (01 January to 31 December 2006)

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar type of service within the last 2 years, must be financially capable to bid, and have key personnel and equipment (owned, leased or purchased) available for the implementation of the said service. The lists of minimum equipment required are indicated in the Eligibility Forms. The Eligibility Check / Screening, as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids, shall use a non-discretionary "PASS/FAIL" criteria Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference(s), Post-qualification, and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR), and as further stipulated in the Bid's Terms of Reference.

Schedule of activities are as follows:

Activities	Date	Time	Venue
2. Issuance of Bid Documents	08 Dec.-22 Dec. 2005	12:00 Noon	LTFRB (BAC Secretariat)
3. Pre-Bid Conference	22 Dec. 2005	2:00 PM	LTFRB Conference Hall
4. Last Day-Submission of Bids	04 Jan. 2006	12:00 Noon	LTFRB (BAC Secretariat)
5. Opening of Bids and Eligibility	04 Jan. 2006	2:00 PM	LTFRB Conference Hall

Bid documents can be obtained from the BAC Secretariat by the prospective bidders upon payment of a non refundable amount of Php 20,000.00.

For further inquiries, please contact the LTFRB BAC Secretariat at Telephone Nos.: 426-2501 & 426-2485.

LTFRB reserves the right to reject all bids, to waive any formalities or defects found, or to accept such bids to award to any agency whose bid is most advantageous to the LTFRB, in particular, or to the government in general.

EXEC. DIR. RONALDO M. SALUNGA
LTFRB BAC CHAIRMAN

(PDI - Dec. 8, 2005)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1200 Taguig City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO Tel. Nos. 893-6001 to 47/893-1320; Fax No. 840-1575

PNOC
The Energy Company

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors with successful experience as primary contractor in the execution of at least three (3) piping insulation and cladding projects within the last ten (10) years, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

INSULATION AND CLADDING REFURBISHMENT WORKS IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE LEYTE GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD – FLUID COLLECTION AND REINJECTION SYSTEM (LGPF-FCRS) EDC 05-188

The Approved Budget is PhP 8,057,310.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 90 calendar days.

Application forms for eligibility and bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o Francis T. Tolibas local 5179) starting **December 1, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Pesos: One Thousand (PhP 1,000.00).**

Site inspection is on **December 8, 2005** at the Leyte Geothermal Production Field in Ormoc, Leyte. For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **December 9, 2005** at the Admin Conference Room, Leyte Geothermal Production Field, Ormoc Leyte.

The application for eligibility, letter of intent and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila **not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time)** of **January 3, 2006** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - December 1 & 8, 2005)

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afp retirement and separation benefits system
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Telephone Nos. 911-4071 to 80

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

AFP Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFPRSBS)

CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE PERSON-POSITION MATCHING ASSESSMENT EXERCISE IN AFPRSBS

(Consists in Employees' Profiling with the end in view of placing the right person at the right position and determining career options available for the subject employee)

1. The **AFP Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFPRSBS)**, through the 2005 Corporate budget as approved by its Board of Trustees intends to apply the sum of **FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND PHILIPPINES PESOS (P550,000.00)**, inclusive of all taxes, fees and expenses, being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the **Contract for Consultancy Services for the Person-Position Matching Assessment Exercise**. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening of the financial proposals.
2. The AFPRSBS now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOI) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and short listing for **Employees' profiling that will place the right person at the right position and determine career options available for the subject employee.** Interested consultants must submit their LOIs on or before 22 December 2005 at CMA-C, 2nd Flr, AFPRSBS Bldg., 424 Capinpin Ave., Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City and secure the Eligibility Documents therefrom. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents: **on or before 2:00PM of 11 January 2006 at CMA-C, 2nd Flr, AFPRSBS Bldg, 424 Capinpin Ave., Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City.** Only those that are short listed will be entitled to submit bids.
3. The BAC shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted LOIs and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A). The criteria and rating system for short listing are:
   - *i. Applicable experience of the consultant considering both the overall experiences of the firm and the individual experiences of the principal and key staff including the times when employed by other firms (40%);*
   - *ii. Qualification of Consultant/s staff who may be assigned to the job vis-à-vis extent and complexity of the undertaking (30%); and*
   - *iii. Current workload relative to capacity (30%);*
4. LOIs must be delivered by hand, through mail, facsimile to CMA-C 2nd Flr AFPRSBS Bldg, 424 Capinpin Ave., Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City on or before **5:00PM on 22 December 2005.**
5. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of RA No. 9184, and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with IRR-A of RA No. 9184, only bids from short listed consultants will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in the Eligibility Documents. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA No. 9184 the contract will only be awarded to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

   The PROCURING ENTITY shall evaluate bids using the **Quality-Cost Based Evaluation/Selection (QCBE/QCBS)** procedure. The PROCURING ENTITY shall indicate the weights to be allocated for the Technical and Financial Proposals. The criteria and rating system for the evaluation of bids shall be provided in the Instructions to Bidders.
6. Interested consultants may obtain further information from the Human Resources Department, AFPRSBS, Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Q.C. (Tel No. 9114071-80) from 9:00 to 11:30 AM and 1:00PM to 4:00PM.
7. The contract shall be completed within forty five (45) working days.
8. The AFPRSBS reserves the right to reject any and all bids, annul the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Human Resource Department
Marietta Co-Arnaldo (Hd, HRD) or Ronald Cahigan
AFPRSBS, 424 Capinpin Ave., Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
911-5984; 911-4071 loc 256
mc_arnaldo_2000@yahoo.com or ronnel2195@yahoo.com
911-8630 (fax)

FRANKLIN C. ACOSTA
Signature of the BAC Chairman or
Authorized Representative of the
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 8 & 15, 2005)

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT
J.P. Laurel Ave., Davao City
Tel. # 221-9400

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

1. The *Davao City Water District*, with the *Approved Budget for 2005* intends to apply the sum of ***Two Hundred Thirteen Thousand One Hundred Fifty Pesos (P 213,150.00)*** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply and delivery of *DCWD T-Shirts*. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening
2. The *Davao City Water District* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for:

   1 Lot/Package · Supply and delivery of 609 pcs. DCWD T-Shirts ABC: Php 213, 150.00

   Delivery of the GOODS is required by *January 30, 2006*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from *Davao City Water District* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8.00 a.m. up to 5:00 p.m.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of non refundable fee in the amount of *P 1,500.00/package*. The method of payment will be on Cash Basis. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The *Davao City Water District* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on ***December 15, 2005 at 9:00 o'clock A.M.*** at ***DCWD BAC-A Secretariat Office, J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City.***
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before ***December 27, 2005 at 9:00 o'clock A.M.*** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of ***cash or Manager's check*** and in the amount of ***Php 2,131.50***. Late Bids shall not be accepted
8. Bid opening shall be on ***December 27, 2005 at 9:00 o'clock A.M.*** at ***DCWD BAC-A Secretariat Office, J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City*** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
9. The *Davao City Water District* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Davao City Water District
BAC-A
J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada Davao City

Tel. No.	221-9400 (8000)
E-mail add	dcwd@davao-water.gov.ph
Fax No.	224-5392
Website	www.davao-water.gov.ph

(Sgd.) VIRGINIA S. MARIMON
BAC-A Chairperson

(PDI – December 1 & 8, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

LICENSE FOR PRIVATE RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT AGENCY

PRPA LICENSE NO. M-05-03-252 ☐ New ☒ Renewal

TIN NO. 203-232-250

This license to recruit, process and deploy landbased workers is hereby granted to

SFI HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTANCY INC.
Unit 1603 Jollibee Plaza
Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Center
Pasig City

pursuant to the Labor Code and the Omnibus Rules Implementing the Code

This license shall be valid for the period 14 October 2005 to 13 October 2007 unless sooner revoked, cancelled or suspended for violation of the Labor Code and related issuances. Transfer or use by any other person or entity renders this license null and void.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Official Seal of National Capital Region, Department of Labor and Employment, to be affixed at the City of Manila Philippines, this 20th day of October 2005.

(Sgd.) RICARDO S. MARTINEZ, SR., CESO III
Regional Director

(PDI – December 8, 2005) *(Renewal of this license is thirty (30) days before expiration date)*

JOB Market ONLINE visit us at: www.jobmarketonline.com

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Bands rock on to Sony AZ

IT WAS A NIGHT OF MUSIC AND entertainment as the country's hottest acts jammed together with the Sony AZ series at the Expo Exchange in Greenbelt 1. Barbie Almalbis, 7 Shots of Wisdom, Sandwich, Session Road, 6Cycle Mind, and Blue Ketchup sent the full house jumping with their distinct brands of rock and roll. Hosted by VJs Karel and Beau, the event marked the culmination of a day-long exhibit of Sony's latest network audio product, the Sony AZ Series.

Played on the Sony AZ Series were the fave tunes of the country's freshest young faces. Visitors got a chance to groove not only to the playlists of VJs Heart, Iya, Karel and Beau but also to the superior sound quality delivered by the Sony AZ series.

The Sony AZ series is the latest HiFi system that is set to conquer the urban party scene with its futuristic elegance, high style, and smooth music theater functions. It is a sophisticated network audio system that combines sleek touch sensors, USB connection, and the powerful S-Master Digital Amplifier, a unique Sony technology, that delivers the coolest and crispest tunes.

The Sony AZ Series' high-tech touch sensor technology delivers comfort and ease of use responding to the lightest touch of its surface display. Meanwhile, its USB Audio Streaming feature also gives the quickest and most convenient access to audio, video, and gaming sources from the PC. And with the USB Memory Playback, you can easily transfer and store MP3 files from your PC or laptop into any flash memory device and enjoy direct playback via the USB slot of the AZ HiFi.

But more than just downloaded tracks, the AZ series also support other media formats such as CD, DVD, VCD, CD-R-CD-RW, and Tape Cassettes. No matter the format, the AZ series is sure to bring you a sound experience like no other with its revolutionary sound technology, the S-Master Digital Amplifier. Indeed, AZ Series is without a doubt a shout-out to the party scene that you have finally arrived.

The Sony AZ series is available in Sony Square located at Park Square and in Gateway Mall, and in authorized Sony dealers nationwide. For more news on Sony's latest products, log on to www.sony.com.ph, email info.sph@ap.sony.com, or call up Sony's Customer Contact Center at 878-7600.

SANDWICH rocks with the Sony AZ.

FOOD FIRSTS BLAZES THROUGH RCBC PLAZA

In keeping with its high-status image, the RCBC Plaza sought only the most distinguished name in dining concepts to exclusively operate its huge food court. The Triple-V group is the pioneer in bringing more choices and newly cooked goodness to the fastfood scene with Triple-V Express. The Triple-V name guarantees great value for first-class cuisine, and these standards are taken to the next level at RCBC Plaza. You get all the convenience, with all the taste, but without the costs. Guests looking for the complete fine-dining experience need not search elsewhere as the area also hosts two full-service restaurants at the top of their class. Arkipelago is inspired by the culinary treasures of the entire Philippine archipelago. Turning to the other side, one enters Sake-San, where Japanese cuisine puts on a new face. All these dazzling new food outlets are managed by Food Firsts, under the watchful eye of Ateneo business school graduate Anna B. Narvasa. Other Food Firsts ventures include Triple-V Express branches in SM Megamall and SM City Cebu. For inquiries call 886-6726 or 886-5626. Shown are the guests of honor during the blessing: Vice President Noli de Castro, entrepreneur and statesman extraordinaire Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengo, and mediaworld's icon Korina Sanchez. Fr. Larry Tan, SDB was the officiating priest.

ANCA AWARD, 2ND STRAIGHT FOR GARDENIA

Gardenia Bakeries Philippines Inc (GBPI) was again cited, for two consecutive years already, as the 'Most Outstanding Bread Manufacturer' during the recently conducted 16th Annual National Consumers Awards (ANCA) 2005 held recently at the Westin Philippine Plaza. The award acknowledges the company's exemplary performance and dedication in having constantly excelled in the food industry. Shown in photo are (from left) GBPI executives headed by its president and general manager Simplicio Umali Jr. (5th from left), and CUP officers lawyer Quirino Marquinez (4th from left) and Ambassador Raul Goco (6th from left).

Bits & Clips

Karl Edward Xmas bazaar

IT ISN'T CHRISTMAS AT THE FORT WITHOUT THE Karl Edward Christmas Bazaar. The bazaar runs Dec. 9 to 23 and opens from 2 p.m. to 12 midnight during weekdays and 10 a.m. to 12 midnight on weekends. For the first time, the Karl Edward Bazaar will also be held in its new fully airconditioned home - the Karl Edward Tent at the Fort Bonifacio Global City. This is located right across MC Depot along 32nd St. cor. 8th Ave. Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Parking is spacious and guaranteed safe. For more information on the Karl Edward Christmas Bazaar, call 372-8453 and 374-3726.

Finepix Christmas Bonanza

FUJIFILM FINEPIX DIGITAL CAMERAS PRESENTS the Finepix Christmas Bonanza. With every purchase of participating Fujifilm Finepix digital camera models, stand a chance to win the grand prize of a Finepix S5600 digital camera package. The latest model in Fujifilm's S-series, SLR-type digital camera with 5.1 megapixels and 10x zoom will include a 1GB xD memory card, DigiCharge Kit II, and free print coupons for as many as 250 4R prints at Fujifilm Digital Imaging Stations. To participate, simply fill up the corresponding warranty card of the purchased Fujifilm Finepix digital camera and drop it at designated drop boxes located in participating official Fujifilm Digital Imaging Stations in major malls, department stores and freestanding branches in Metro Manila and Cavite. Selected Finepix digital camera models applicable in the promo are the following: A120, F420, F440, F450, F610, F700, F810, and E550. Deadline for submission of entries is on Jan. 15.

AirAsia 2M free seats promo

AIRASIA, ASIA'S LEADING AND AWARD WINNING low fare airline, is celebrating its 4th anniversary in spectacular fashion. For the first time since its inception in Dec 2001, AirAsia will embark on a no holds barred regional marketing campaign to give away a whopping 2 million seats for free. These free seats are available for all domestic and regional flights departing from AirAsia 4 hubs in Kuala Lumpur, Senai (Johor), Bangkok (Thailand) and Jakarta (Indonesia). AirAsia presently operates over 100 domestic and regional flights to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, China, Macau, Vietnam, Philippines, and Cambodia. To be eligible for the 2 million free seats offer, booking must be completed online at www.airasia.com or via mobile.airasia.com (available on GPRS, 3G, EDGE mobile phones or wireless device) between Dec. 7 to 28, for travel in Feb. 7 to Oct. 10. For more information, visit www.airasia.com.

Microtel gets top place in guest satisfaction

FOR THE 4TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR, ECONOMY / budget hotel chain Microtel Inns & Suites ranked highest in guest satisfaction in the J.D. Power and Associates 2005 North American Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study. Microtel scored highest of 13 other hotel brands in its segment and outperformed its competitors in key guest satisfaction measures including services, facilities, and costs and fees. Microtel Inns & Suites is a fast-growing US chain of newly-constructed, interior corridor hotels, with 274 branches open or under construction. In the Philippines, there are five Microtel Inns & Suites located in Baguio, Tarlac, Cavite, Batangas, and Mindoro. All Microtel Properties offer free continental breakfast. Travelers can avail of the MicroPass frequent guest program and earn free stays. Microtel Inns & Suites (Pilipinas) is operated by Paramount Property Management Co. For inquiries and reservations, contact (02) 810-9526 or send INFO to (0917) 855-6161. Log on to www.microtelinn.com or www.microtelphilippines.com.

Freestyle at Suburbia Bar

AN EXCITING HOMECOMING AWAIT NIGHT owls tonight as premier band Freestyle returns back for a performance at Suburbia Bar in Adriatico St. in Malate. Performing back-to-back with Freestyle is acoustic band Drizzle. Check out also other Suburbia Bar specials for this month: Kyla on Dec. 9; Nyoy Volante on Dec. 15; Michael Angelo on Dec. 16; Akafellas and FreeVerse on Dec. 21 and South Border on Dec. 28. Call Suburbia Bar at 524-6263 or 811-0725 for more details.

2005 Polo Mint Mania

SCHOOL IS GOING TO GET COOLER AS POLO, the mint with the hole, invades campuses all over the Philippines to stage the 2005 Polo Mint Mania. This one-of-a-kind event features physical and mental challenges that will test the students' skills and capabilities. The games that are lined-up are the "Polo Mint Dash Competition", "The Dress-up Your Tambayan Contest" and the "Polo Mint Hoop." Watch for the Polo Mint Mania in Baliwag University in Bulacan on Dec. 9, Ateneo de Naga on Dec. 13, Bicol University on Dec. 14, Los Baños on Dec. 15, and Central Luzon State University on Dec. 16.

Pitbull Dog Show

THE PARKWOODS 2 PITBULL DOG SHOW WILL be held on Dec. 10., at Parkwoods Green Executive Village Maybunga Pasig City. This event is sponsored by the Philippine Pitbull Club. For details contact Dr. Jay Geronimo at 0916-7674558.

Aqua Loco soon to open

WATCH FOR THE OPENING OF AQUA LOCO WATER Refilling Station on Dec. 11, 10 a.m. at the Tahanan Yaman Homes, Brgy. Buenavista, Gen. Trias, Cavite.

2006 Gawad Sinop Award

THE PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE FOR SUPPLY MANAGEment (PISM) and the Society of Fellows in Supply Management (SFSM) open the Search for 2006 Gawad Sinop Awardee, the Supply Management Professional of the Year. Candidates must be a Filipino citizen, have at least 5 years of practice in supply chain management, have outstanding achievement or contributions to the profession, a degree of excellent achievement in the company they work, the government or society in general, leadership and professional integrity and community stature. Nomination forms are now available at the PISM Secretariat. Deadline of submission is on or before Jan. 19. Awarding will be held on March 10 at the Makati Shangri-La, Makati City. For further inquiries, call the PISM Secretariat at 634-5942 or 634-5955; e-mail at secretariat@pism.org or visit the website at www.pism.org.

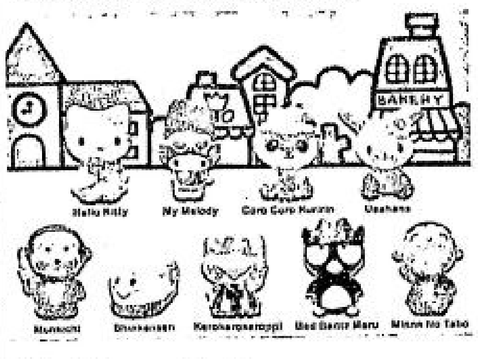
ProductFiles

APS launches Frontline

THE ATENEO PROfessional Schools (APS) has launched the maiden issue of Frontline, a publication that shares a wealth of knowledge and experience from the APS community. The first issue asks, why do some leaders see their way through turbulent times while others do not? The timely question offers a range of answers from each of the APS units: the Ateneo Law School, Ateneo Graduate School of Business, Ateneo Information Technology Institute, Ateneo School of Government and Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health. Interviewees for the 56-page maiden issue vary from the private sector and government to the medical field and to the academe. The quarterly magazine is distributed at the APS campus in Rockwell Center.

Festive freebies at the Ministop Sanrio Festival

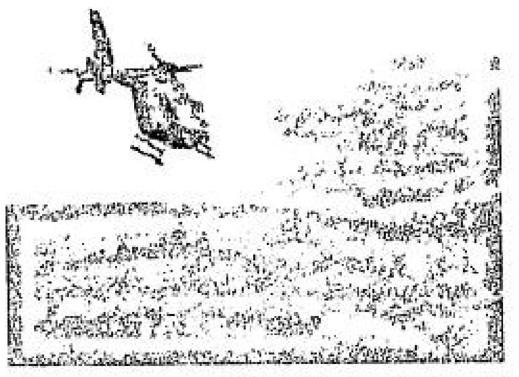
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, MINISTOP PRESENTS festive surprises for young and old alike with the Ministop Sanrio Festival featuring adorable Hello Kitty, cuddly Kerokerokeroppi, supersonic Shinkansen and other lovable characters. From Nov. 24, 2005 to Jan. 22, 2006, customers can bring home any of nine special Sanrio collectible characters with every double purchase of participating grocery products, or by upsizing their fastfood value meal drinks. After redeeming their premium Sanrio item, customers receive a raffle coupon which entitles them to join a special draw and get a chance to win Hello Kitty prizes. Raffle entries must be dropped at designated dropboxes in any Ministop branch on or before Jan. 23, 2006. Draw date is on Jan. 27, 2006. For more information on participating products and other promo mechanics, check out posters and other in-store merchandise at the Ministop branch or Gift Gate Shop nearest you.



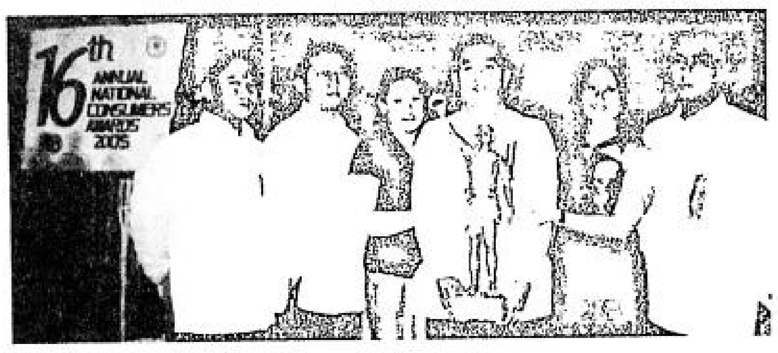
Holiday all-day protection from Charmee

EVERY WOMAN NOW HAS ALL THE REASONS to celebrate the holidays worry-free, hassle-free with an all-day protection only from Charmee. Complete with an all-day comfort and freshness, Charmee offers a good feminine protection line such as feminine pads, pantyliners and its newest feminine wipes. Each product is designed to give every woman a better protection. For monthly period, Charmee feminine pads is the answer for all types of flow with its anti-leak control channels that allow even fluid distribution across the pad, thus, preventing front, side and back leaks. Meanwhile, for every regular day protection, Charmee also offers Regular Unscented Pantyliners and Charmee Feminine Wipes. Available in all leading supermarkets, groceries, and drugstores nationwide, Charmee For All Types of Flow is priced at P2.25 per pad, Charmee Regular Pantyliners at P8.50 for a pack of 8s, and Charmee Feminine Wipes at P21.50 for a pack of 10 pulls (based on suggested retail price).

CALENERGY CONDUCTS AERIAL SEEDING



CalEnergy International recently kicked off the aerial seeding phase of its Casecnan Watershed Pilot Reforestation Program. Over 1,250 kilos of ipil-ipil and acacia seeds were dispersed by the helicopters in the hard-to-reach steep mountain slopes near the watershed area. The seeds were collected early this year by children from various schools in Nueva Ecija and Nueva Vizcaya. The aerial seeding was also supported with a series ground seeding activities by the employees of CalEnergy this November. Tree planting and aerial seeding activities will be implemented for the next five years until the pilot reforestation area is covered. Aside from restoring the Casecnan watershed, the six-year reforestation program also seeks to increase the awareness of the community on the importance of the watershed and the need to preserve and protect it from degradation.



16th ANNUAL NATIONAL CONSUMERS AWARDS 2005

ASAHI APPLIANCES CITED BY ANCA

It's 3 times in a row for Asahi. Asahi, the trusted name in high quality brand of home appliances recently won the 'Most Outstanding Manufacturer of Electric Fans' award in the 16th Annual National Consumers Award (Anca 2005). A consistent winner, Asahi has been awarded as the Most Outstanding Manufacturer of Electric Fans for 3 consecutive years now by consumers through the Consumer Union of the Philippines. Shown in photo with the award trophy is the formidable Asahi sales team for Metro Manila and Luzon (from left) Arnie Niones (Bicol), Leo Cruz, Eva Salcines, Benedict Que, Myla Fajardo, (all from Metro Manila) and Mario Panganiban (Northern Luzon).

MERALCO JOINS CONSUMER TRADE FAIR

Meralco was one of the local companies that lent support and participation to the 5th consumer and trade fair mounted by the Department of Trade and Industry-Consumer Welfare and Trade Regulation Group in cooperation with the Philippine Product Safety and Quality Foundation Inc at SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City recently. In photo are Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila (center), Meralco marketing head Mike Lopez (3rd from left), Customer Service Office head Ruth David (4th from left) together with other distinguished officials and guests.

2ND IMEPA HELD IN MALACAÑANG

The 2nd International Maritime Employer's Presidential Award, was held in the Malacañang Palace Nov. 21. Principal ship owners and ship managers from all around the globe, who are currently employing Filipino seafarers, were awarded by no less than the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Among the awardees were Holland America Line Inc, represented by the vice president of human resources, Wayne Byers (3rd from left), and the director of human resources, Jeff Beattie (1st from left), and Shell International Trading and Shipping Co Ltd represented by the general manager of Shell Ship Management Ltd, Captain Richard Mellor (3rd from right), United Philippine Lines Inc (UPL), Fernando Lising, chair of UPL (2nd from left), Dino Lising, president of UPL (2nd from right), and Jose Consunji, general manager of UPL (1st from right). United Philippine Lines represented two of the twenty five global awardees.

Everyday is Christmas at EASTWOOD CITY

Sundays / 3PM

Kiddie Sunday Shows

Dec. 11 & 18

Mon. & Tues. / 8 PM

Christmas Chorale Concerts

Dec. 12 - St. Scholastica's College School of Music
Dec. 13 - De La Salle Greenhills Kundirana
Dec. 19 - Kostka, Marikina Angels Ensemble
Dec. 20 - Choro De Sta. Cecilia

Wed. & Thurs. / 8 PM

Rock 'n' Roll Christmas

The Best 60's & 70's Bands Perform Live!

Dec. 8 - Coolchange
Dec. 14 - Formula 8
Dec. 15 - Rhythm Authority
Dec. 21 - Hit Makers
Dec. 22- Raymond Brown
Dec. 28 - Fat Session
Dec. 29 - Raymond Brown

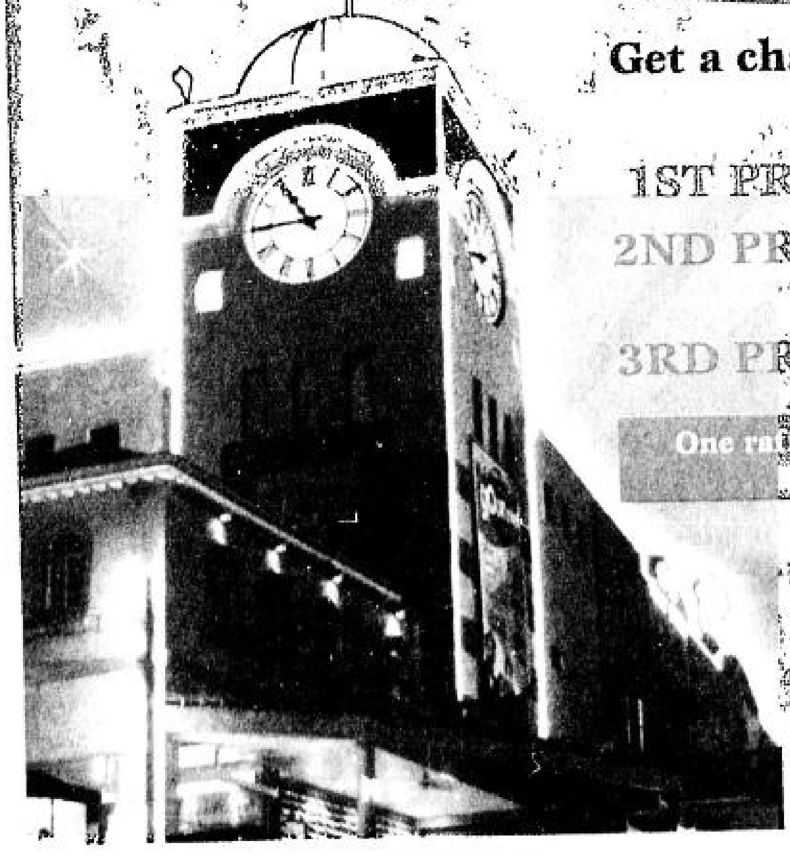
Fri. & Sat. / 9 PM

Fireworks Display

Dec. 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 & 31

WEEKLY WINNERS FROM DEC 3-24!

Eastwood City Shopper's Delight



Get a chance to WIN P20,000 CASH SHOPPING MONEY
plus other consolation prizes

1ST PRIZE: P20,000 shopping money (One winner per week)

2ND PRIZE: Gift certificate for an overnight stay in a superior room with buffet breakfast for 2 persons at The Richmonde Hotel (One winner per week).

3RD PRIZE: 2 Cinema VIP Passes (3 winners per week)

One raffle coupon for every P500.00 single/accumulated purchase from all non-food establishment

See posters and flyers for more details

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-1015 Series of 2005

Only at
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TINUBONG, the Ilocano *bibingka* /D4

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sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart)
or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

Seasoned writers named DGF food writing contest winners

FINALISTS and winners of the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Award 2005: (starting second from left) Carla M. Pacis, Didith Tan Rodrigo, runner-up Joy Subido, Dely Fernandez representing first-prize winner Yvette Fernandez Ferreol and C. Horatius Mosquera. With them are Bobbit Suntay, Lara Fernandez and Michaela Fenix (far right), chair of the award project.

YVETTE FERNANDEZ FERREOL, A television producer for Bloomberg News in New York City and an INQUIRER contributor, won first prize in the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Award 2005.

Her essay, "Pampanga Memories," was about her great-aunt who made the specialties at Essel bakery and the food she served in the "big house."

Runner-up was Joy Subido for her essay, "Bocayo's Sweet Success." It was about Belinda's Special, the label of a *bocayo* or coconut candy made by Mamerto and Imelda Victorio of Pangapisan Sur in Lingayen, Pangasinan.

There were three other finalists in this year's writing competition about Filipino food specialists. Real estate executive C. Horatius Mosquera wrote about Tessie's Goto in Lipa. Writer Carla M. Pacis imagined how *pipian*, a chicken dish with a sauce of roasted rice and flavored with *pasotes*, was brought from Mexico to her Vigan hometown. And Didith Tan Rodrigo wrote about Aling Flora who cooks the sweets offered at the canteen of the Negros Oriental High School in Dumaguete City. Both Mosquera and Rodrigo were finalists in last year's contest.

The announcement was made Monday at the Le Soufflé in Rockwell, Makati, together with the launching of the book, "Slow Food: Philippine Culinary Traditions."

First good news

Being a finalist, Fernandez said, was the first good news in the family after the deaths of her father and sister this year. She couldn't make it to the event and was represented by her mother, Dely Fernandez, sister, Lara, and brother-in-law, Bobbit Suntay.

The winners were given trophies from Bobby Castillo of Seagull Glass Works. All the finalists were awarded prizes given by generous sponsors. These included cash from ABS-CBN subsidiaries (Restaurant 9501, Lifestyle Network and Food Magazine) and from Century Tuna Corp.; books from Anvil Publishing, ABS-CBN Publishing, Center for Culinary Arts, National Book Store, Fully Booked and the LJC Corp.; magazine subscriptions from Appetite, Cook, Emerald Headway, F&B World, Flavors, Food and Summit; gift certificates from Crowne Plaza, Edsa Shangri-La, Intercontinental Manila, New World Renaissance, Mandarin Oriental Manila, Peninsula Manila, Makati Shangri-La, Center for Culinary Arts, San Miguel Corp., Cravings and the LJC Restaurant group.

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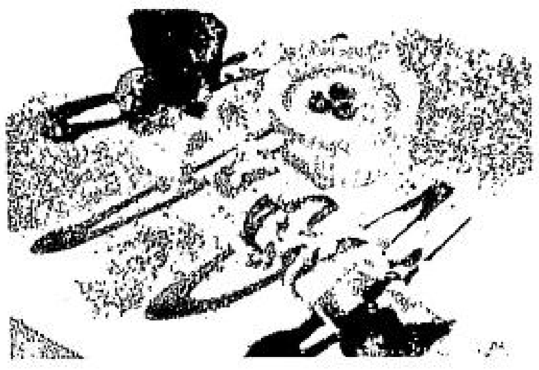
A different kind of treat for the choco loco



DESSERT MEDLEY. Flourless Chocolate Cake with Kahlua Cream, Crème Brûlée and Fresh Fruit Crepe

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

CHOCOLATES ARE HIGHLY versatile food. Combined with other cooking ingredients, they create completely different tastes and textures.

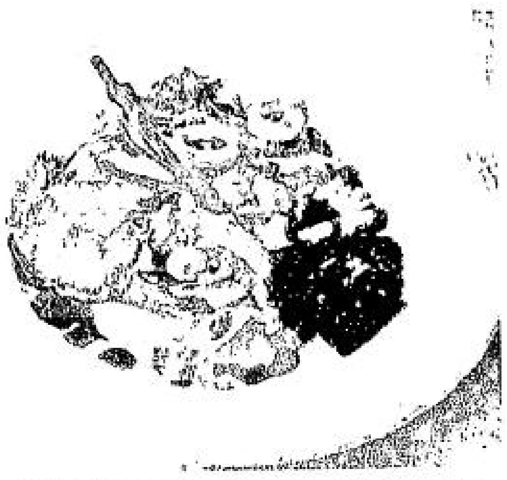
Starting Dec. 12, all Via Mare restaurants will demonstrate this versatility as they feature a variety of dishes with chocolates in them.

Hershey's, one of the world's leading confectionery companies, and Via Mare Corp., led by its chief executive officer and vice president Glenda Barretto, have forged a partnership that will give Filipinos a different chocolate experience.

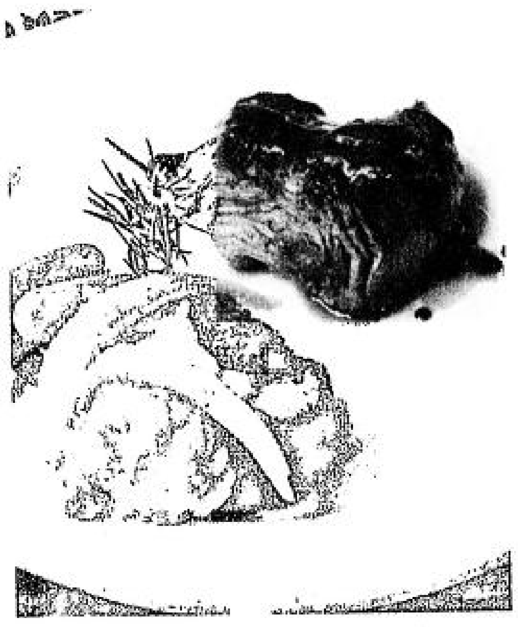
"I welcomed Hershey's proposal of marrying their chocolate bars with our Via Mare cuisine," says Barretto. "I knew this was one culinary challenge I could not pass up for it brought with it a rich and wonder-filled gastronomic inspiration we all grew up with—the Hershey's Milk Bar."

Barretto has concocted an array of mouth-watering dishes, from appetizer to dessert, using Hershey's chocolates as ingredients.

"We are extremely excited to bring Hershey's to Via Mare," says Jerry Santiago, president and regional general manager of Hershey's Philippines, Inc. "We believe in Barretto's expertise in bringing out the best in our prod ucts. We want to show our consumers that chocolate can be a versatile, kitchen-friendly ingredient that goes beyond dessert."



SEAFOOD Salad on Mesclun with Balsamic Hershey's Chocolate Dressing



BEEF Tenderloin in Hershey's Chocolate Sauce

Chocolate, Barretto adds, is a terrific way to add flavor to all kinds of dishes. "Heston Blumenthal of the Fat Duck has become famous for his experiments with chocolate. The most peculiar success is white chocolate with black Russian caviar. In Spain, bitter chocolate is served with Bellota ham from Pata Negra pork. A Norwegian connoisseur combines chocolate with *foie gras*. There's even an odd combination of *fleur de sel* and *tandoori* coconut," says Barretto, who uses chocolates every now and then in some of the food her restaurant serves.

Chocolate dishes

Barretto will serve chocolate-inspired Epicurean explorations with Hershey's in all Via Mare Oyster Bar and Café branches until February.

Start with Seafood Salad on Mesclun with Balsamic Hershey's Chocolate Dressing that consists of assorted lettuce topped with poached prawns, crab meat and squid, lavishly laced with balsamic vinegar, red wine and, of course, Hershey's chocolate syrup mixture.

Roasted Aubergine Soup with Cream and Hershey's Cocoa is a rich and creamy soup of roasted eggplant gently simmered in white wine and rich stock, blended with cream. The soup is garnished with cheese croutons and sprinkled generously with Hershey's Cocoa Powder.

"Chocolate is one of the most versatile and beloved foods in the world," says Barretto. "To be very honest about it, one doesn't have to develop a recipe to showcase its flavor-enhancing abilities. You simply throw some in any dish for depth and soon you have people wondering about that mysterious flavor."

A TOAST TO A NEW PARTNERSHIP: Alberto Arceo, president of Via Mare Corp.; Glenda Barretto, chief executive officer and vice president of Via Mare Corp.; Jerry Santiago, president and regional general manager of Hershey's Philippines Inc.; and Erick E. Ampil, group product manager of Hershey's Phils.

> When Glenda Barretto says chocolate is a terrific way to add flavor to dishes, how can you say no?

Two choices

Chocolate lovers have two choices for entrée. Beef Tenderloin in Hershey's Chocolate Sauce is roast beef tenderloin drizzled with Hershey's chocolate syrup and served with vegetable bouquet. The chocolate sauce is prepared with beef stock, red wine vinegar, thyme and a combination of Hershey's dark chocolate bar and Hershey's chocolate syrup.

Grouper Fillet in White Hershey's Chocolate Sauce is pan-roasted fillet of *lapu-lapu* served with creamy white sauce of Hershey's milk chocolate laced with lemon and dill. This is dusted with Hershey's cocoa and topped with roasted almond flakes.

Of course, the chocolate treat will not be complete without cocoa-laced desserts. You can indulge in Chocolate Panna Cotta and Chocolate-Dipped Bananas. If you are counting calories, Flourless Chocolate Cake with Kahlua Cream is a guiltless treat prepared with a combination of Hershey's chocolate powder and special dark chocolate bar. The mixture is simmered in syrup and butter and baked for an hour in a moderate oven. It is then topped with a mix of heavy cream, Hershey's special dark chocolate bar and a dollop of Kahlua cream.

Dessert with a twist is the Sweet Potato Pie with Walnut Crust, which is fortified with Hershey's caramel or butterscotch sauce. Hershey's has also been added to favorite Via Mare snacks, such as *Bibingka* with Chocolate Kisses and *Puto Bumbong* with Caramel and Butterscotch.

The partnership of Hershey's and Via Mare promises a culinary experience unlike any other.

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph.

Beef Tenderloin in Hershey's Chocolate Sauce

1 k beef tenderloin (trimmed 800 g)
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp mustard
2 tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper

Clean and trim the whole tenderloin. Reserve the trimmings for the sauce.

Marinate the whole tenderloin in olive oil overnight in the refrigerator. When ready to cook, rub the whole. tenderloin with mustard, salt and pepper. Sear the tenderloin on a hot grill. Remove from heat and allow to rest for 10 minutes. Wrap in foil and roast in 350° C oven for about 20 minutes for medium doneness. Allow to rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

Arrange on a serving dish and drizzle with chocolate sauce.

Chocolate Sauce:
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp garlic, minced
100 g onion, diced
30 g celery, diced
40 g carrots, diced
200 g beef trimmings
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
1 small sprig thyme
3 c beef stock
1 tbsp liquid seasoning
2 tbsp roux (mix 1 tbsp butter and 1 tbsp flour)
¼ c fresh milk
20 g Hershey's dark chocolate bar
1 tbsp Hershey's chocolate syrup

Heat oil in saucepan and sauté garlic, onion, celery, carrots, beef trimmings over medium heat.

Add red wine vinegar, thyme, beef stock and liquid seasoning and simmer for about an hour. Strain and discard solids.

Return sauce to the pan and bring to a boil. Add the roux whisking vigorously and simmer for about 10 minutes

Add the milk, Hershey's dark chocolate bar and the Hershey's chocolate syrup while whisking continuously. Reduce heat and simmer until thick but flowing consistency is reached.

Serves six persons

Seafood Salad on Mesclun with Balsamic Hershey's Chocolate Dressing

200 g baby prawns, poached, shelled and de-veined
120 g crabmeat, cooked and picked over
120 g squid rings, poached
240 g mesclun (assorted lettuce)
90 g scallops
3 tbsp olive oil
½ pc lemon

Combine the poached seafood and marinate in olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Toss lightly. Cover and keep in the refrigerator.

Arrange the lettuce on a serving dish and top with the poached seafood. Drizzle with Hershey's chocolate dressing.

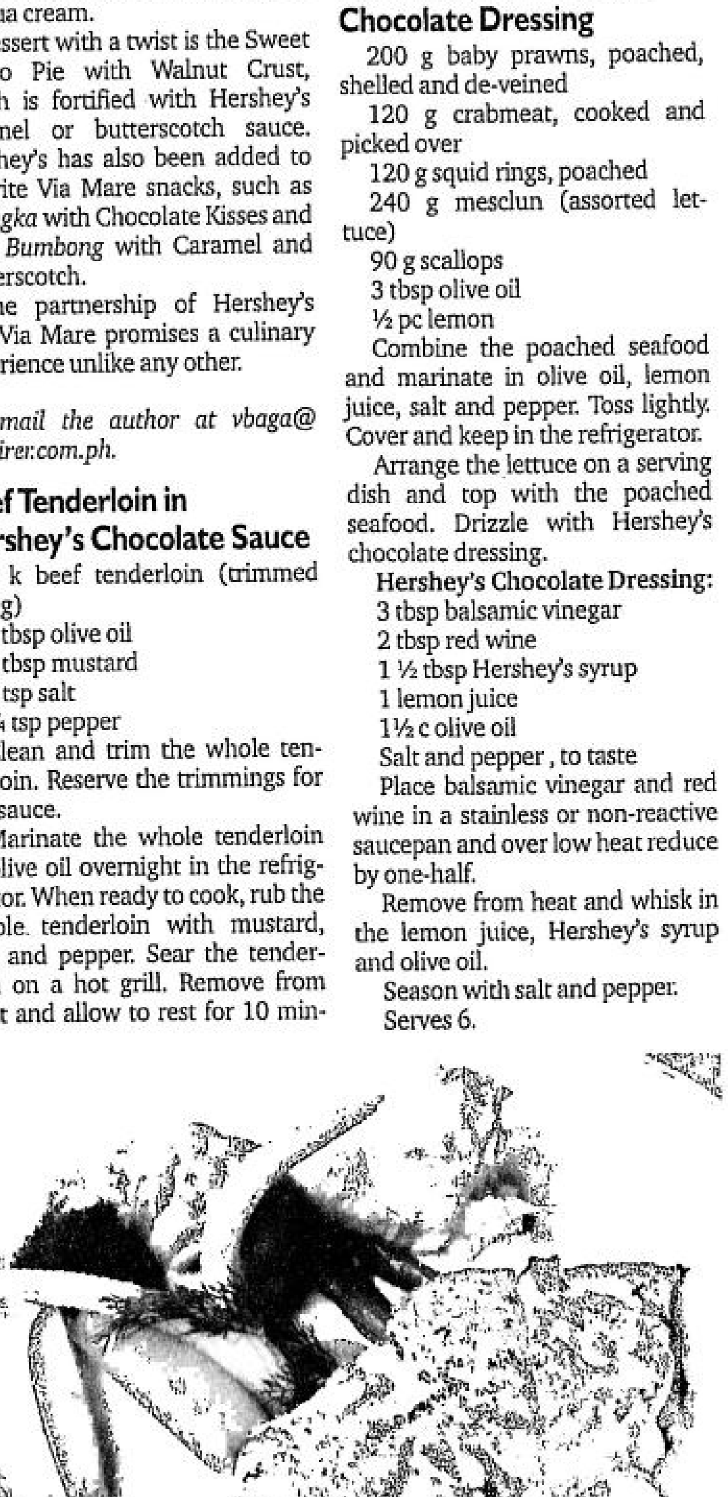
Hershey's Chocolate Dressing:
3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 tbsp red wine
1 ½ tbsp Hershey's syrup
1 lemon juice
1½ c olive oil
Salt and pepper , to taste

Place balsamic vinegar and red wine in a stainless or non-reactive saucepan and over low heat reduce by one-half.

Remove from heat and whisk in the lemon juice, Hershey's syrup and olive oil.

Season with salt and pepper.

Serves 6.



GROUPER Fillet in Hershey's White Chocolate Sauce

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Pampanga memories

(Editor's note: As has been an INQUIRER *tradition since the first year of the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez food writing awards, we are publishing the winners, starting off in this issue with the first-prize winner, Yvette Fernandez Ferreol, who happens to be our New York-based contributor.)*

By Yvette Fernandez Ferreol

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, our family reunions were held at what we call the Big House, the home of our great grandparents. The townspeople of San Fernando, Pampanga, knew it as the Lazatin House across the street from Essel Bakery.

The bakery was run by our maiden great aunt, Anita Lazatin, our Lola Itang. In the summertime, my sister Jackie trained with her in the provincial kitchen. Jackie recalls the heady aroma of buttery bread… of "customers eagerly awaiting the flaky *ensaymadas* sprinkled with sugar and grated *queso de bola*" that flew out of the store only minutes after they were taken out of the oven. Every other day, the Essel kitchens churned out dozens of loaves of *taisan*, an airy sponge cake brushed with melted butter and sugar, and little cups of *tocino del cielo*, rich egg custard covered with burnt caramel.

During the holiday season, Jackie remembers Lola Itang "scrambling to fulfill orders for dozens of boxed *empanaditas*," chopped cashew nuts enrobed in a pastry dipped in butter and sugar. Another favorite was boat tarts filled with gooey caramel and topped with crisp meringue that won an award in a nationwide cookfest.

Best but not for sale

But Lola Itang's most talked-about delicacies were those not for sale. They were the dishes she served across the street at the Big House. Friends of friends, food experts, foreign ambassadors based in Manila, everyone eagerly accepted invitations to dine at the Big House.

Lola Itang's most popular dish was stewed pigeon. Carmen, her youngest sister (we call her Lola Meng), says Lola Itang "sautéed the birds in garlic before stewing them in vinegar and fresh tomatoes. She strained the pigeon livers in melted butter and poured the sauce atop the birds before serving."

The fish dish was usually grilled whole *dalag* (mudfish), with a side dish of *balobalo*, fermented rice and freshwater shrimp that reeked of rancid fish. Jackie says, "a spoonful of its intense sour saltiness wrapped in a fresh mustard leaf kicked our taste buds awake, enhanced our appetites and made us crave for more."

Other days we had fried *hito* (catfish) served with grilled eggplant. If we were lucky, our catfish was pregnant, and we sent her roe to be deep-fried in the kitchen till it was crisp and golden. If not, we contented ourselves with chomping noisily away at fried fish tails and fins that we dipped in vinegar and *bagoong* (shrimp paste).

My mother's crispy dish of choice was *kamaro*, deep-fried mole crickets. Lola Itang turned the swarms of predators into a prized dish served on a porcelain platter. Mama said the pests were "stewed in vinegar and garlic and then fried" till they made a distinct crunch when bitten into.

THE AUTHOR

When in season, guests enjoyed the custard-like texture of *ebong barag*, the soft-shelled eggs of monitor lizards. Lola Meng said the eggs were "boiled and then buried in salt for several hours before serving" with steamed rice. The idea of devouring a reptile egg made me cringe, but Jackie was more adventurous. She described its delicate flavor as "a cross between a soft-boiled egg yolk and a salty light mayonnaise."

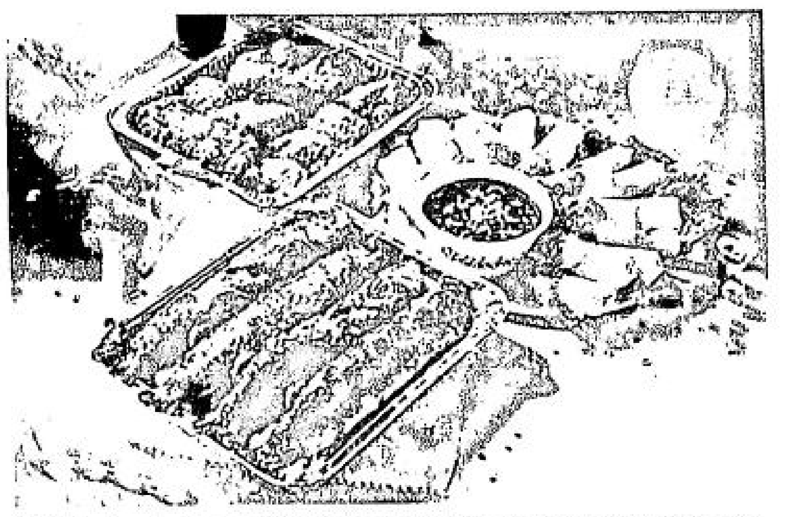
Orange fat

We spent hot afternoons in Lola Itang's airy kitchen watching her helpers sit at the wooden table with large pots of fresh *talangka* (small crabs) that had been dunked in boiling water. The maids squeezed the tiny crabs between their thumbs and forefingers to coach out globs of orange fat that were oozed into recycled Cheez Whiz jars. Each crab was the size of a P1 coin and provided perhaps a quarter teaspoon of fat. The maids listened to whole episodes of their favorite radio soap operas before one small jar was fully filled with *taba ng talangka*.

When they were done, we mixed spoonfuls of the crustacean fat into platefuls of piping-hot rice till every grain of white was tinged with morsels of orange. Each bite made our ecstatic palates sing songs of joy.

The meals ended with Lola Meng's mango sponge cakes blanketed with whipped cream, or Lola Itang's avocado ice cream and coconut sherbet. And always, always, treats from Essel Bakery: platters of butter-and-sugar-drenched *empanaditas* and caramel boats wrapped in cellophane of different colors.

Lola Itang left us last year. She closed her eyes and went off to the big kitchen in the sky. A bereft Lola Meng lives alone with her servants in the Big House, missing her older sister. But across the street and at Essel Bake Line stalls scattered across Pampanga, townspeople still go home with Lola Itang's special treats: loaves of *taisan* brushed with butter and sugar, *ensaymadas* with grated *queso de bola*, and nut-filled *empanaditas* to grace their holiday tables and create for their children delightful memories of their very own.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No-fuss Christmas meals

KUSINABILIDAD, THE NEWEST recipe service provider of SAFI Heinz UFC, offers suggestions for no-fuss sumptuous meals.

SAFI Heinz UFC produces Heinz, UFC, Datu Puti, Mang Tomas, Golden Fiesta, Papa, Jufran and Mafran products. Here's one recipe from Kusinabilidad to help make your Christmas spread more festive:

Mang Tomas Lengua in Mushroom Sauce

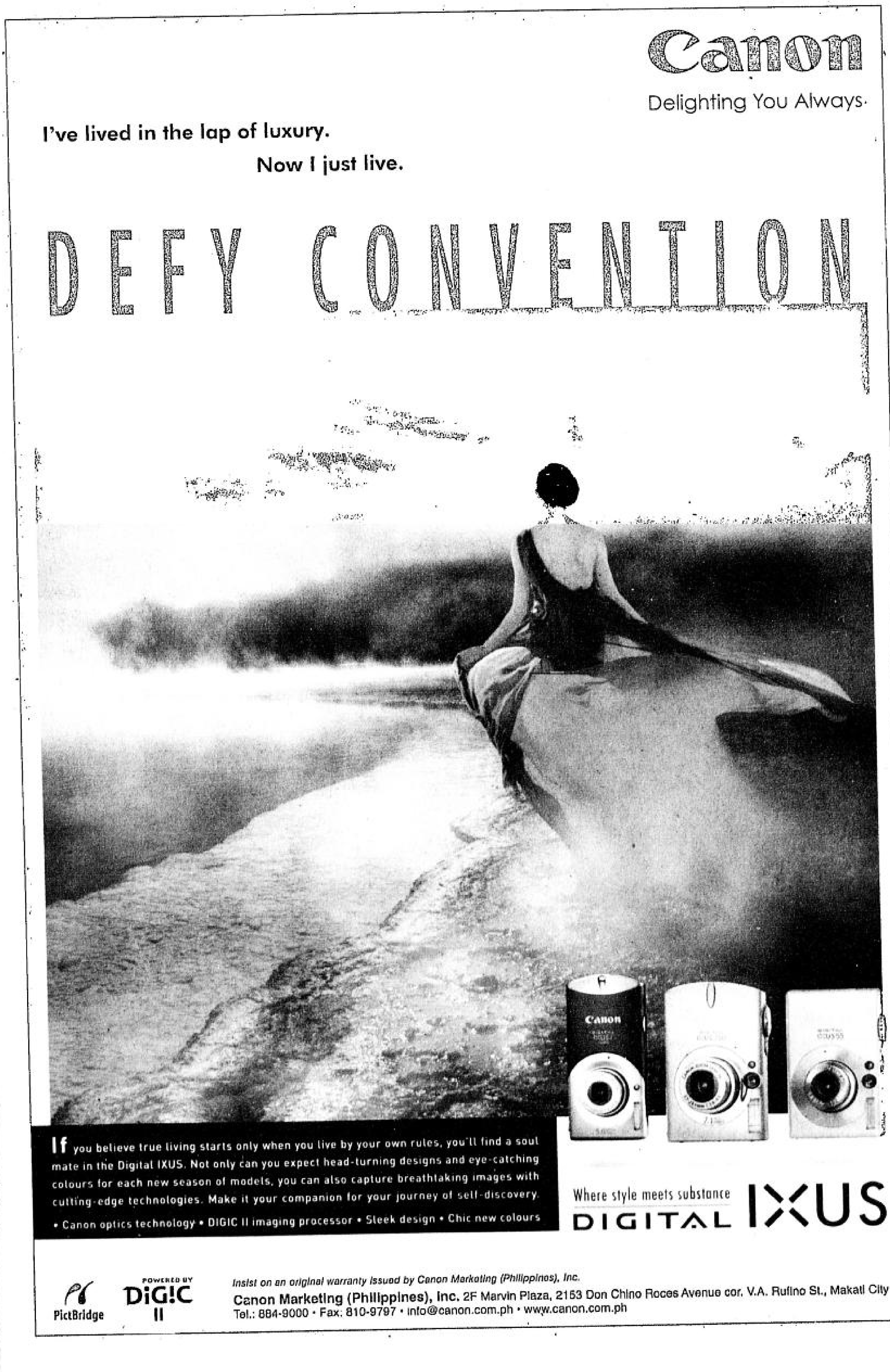
1 bottle Mang Tomas Gravy
10 pieces green olives
½ kg *lengua* or *dila* (ox tongue)
3 tbsp cream
3 tbsp butter
¼ c chicken stock or water
¼ c onions
2 tbsp button mushroom water
1 tsp garlic
1 tsp Datu Puti Soy Sauce
2 tbsp Mang Tomas All-Around Sarsa
2 tbsp white wine or cooking wine (optional)
½ c button mushrooms, sliced into halves

Soften *lengua* in pressure cooker with water for at least 30 minutes. Clean and slice into ¼-inch thick pieces.

Sauté onions and garlic in butter. Add mushrooms, olives, and *lengua*. Add Mang Tomas Gravy and Mang Tomas All-Around Sarsa.

Simmer until cooked.

Idea maker tip. For a more festive treat, put the *lengua* in an oven-proof dish. Top with some very soft mashed potato and sprinkle with cheese. Top broil in the oven till golden.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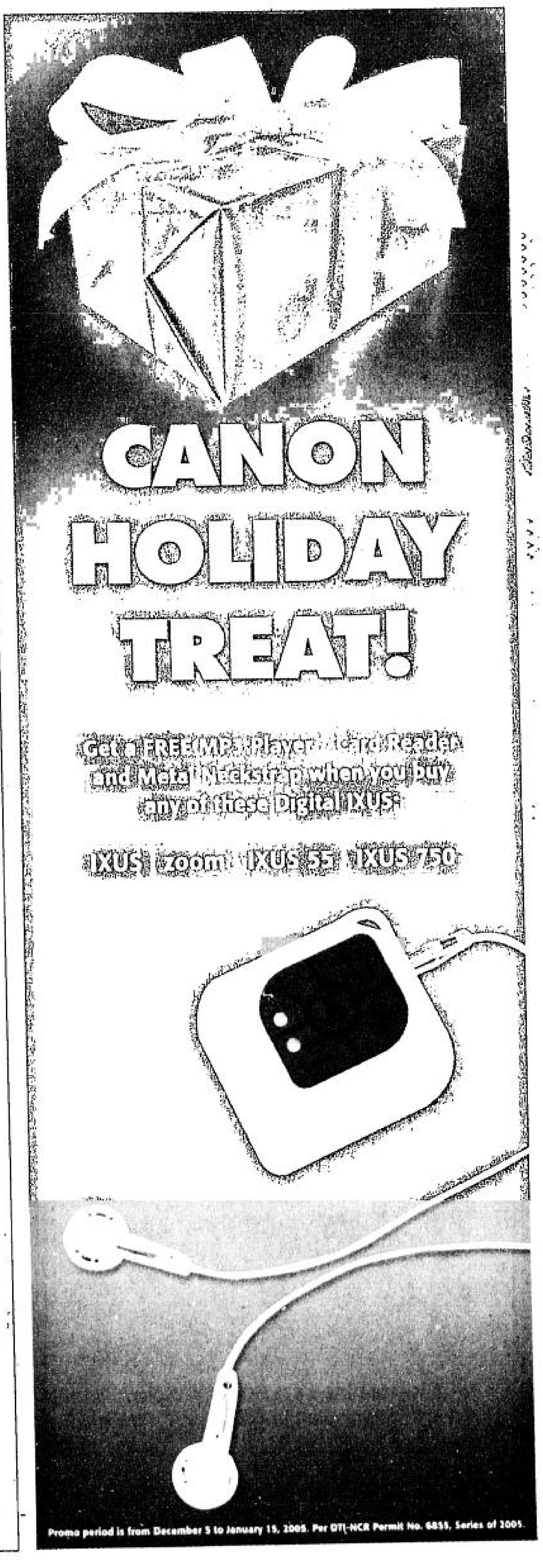
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The Paskuhan table

The Captain's Bar of Mandarin Oriental Manila recreates the 19th-century Filipino Christmas

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

BEFORE EATING ANYTHING ON THE Christmas table, Dez Bautista's grandmother required the family to take *pospas de gallina*, rice gruel with chicken. It was to remind each of them, he said, where the family fortune came from. An accounting of how this fortune was made was displayed at the rice exhibit of the National Museum last year.

A huge book contained a record of 200 years of the Bautista family of Malolos, including maps of lands drawn in silk with the names of the *kasama* (sharecroppers) and their share of the *palay*, and purchase of the lands. The documents also traced the creation of haciendas through the sale of small lands as payment for debts, a *pacto de retroventa*, as well as a letter that explained why the land had to be sold.

While the *pospas* was a simple dish, it was nevertheless so flavorful because, in the old days, native chicken was used, boiled to almost smithereens so that all the wonderful juices made up the broth. Today, you'd have to add chicken seasoning to make chicken taste like chicken.

After the *pospas*, it was time to go through the table groaning with what was considered really special food. That meant not only food you didn't have everyday; it was mainly "food of our conquerors," Bautista said. This was why the *queso de bola* (edam cheese ball from Holland), imported *jamon* glazed with pineapple, and the roasted *pavo* (turkey), mainstays in Christmas feasts of the Spanish, became part of the *ilustrado* table.

Those can be found today in more modest Filipino tables using more modest versions—balls of cheddar cheese, small sweet pear-shaped hams and *lechon manok*.

Preview

The discussion and tasting were made during a preview of Paskuhan, a recreation of 19th-century Filipino Christmas at the Mandarin Oriental Manila, which will be featured at the Captain's Bar until Dec. 16.

It's the second collaboration between the hotel and Bautista, impressed by the reception given to last May's festival of fiesta cooking called "Piging."

DEZ Bautista beside the Paskuhan décor made in Paete, Laguna

What Bautista did was to ask friends for their heirloom recipes, dishes that had been cooked by families through the years.

Christmas menus remain almost the same, sometimes through generations, expected by the clan every Christmas. We take comfort in the sameness, remembering the tastes and aroma, knowing beforehand who cooked what and how it was done.

The heirloom recipes for the preview included *lengua con vino*, ox tongue stewed in white wine from the Constantinos of Balagtas, Vigan. There was *apahap pasingaw*, steamed sea bass from the Santos family of Malolos, Bulacan. And from the Aristocrat Restaurant family of Nancy Reyes, it was the roast chicken stuffed with *chorizo*.

The *lengua* and *apahap* were so delicate, a great contrast to the chicken where the *chorizo* gave a strong but wonderful spicy flavor.

Other Malolos family recipes were distributed through the weeks such as the *galantina*, chicken roulade from the Tanchangcos, *pato embuchado* or duck roulade, and *pata negra* (pork leg with prune sauce and chestnuts) from the Bautistas, and the *jamon* Bulakeña, the Enriquez family's way with ham.

Margarita Araneta Fores gave her family's holiday recipe of sweet *longganisa* with grapes.

Switch

The traditional menu of my mother's family ended when my grandmother died. It was roasted turkey, our main dish for years until the switch to *capon* because my uncle worked at San Miguel Corporation that then produced the big fat, castrated male chickens for the season.

Bautista said in the old days, families produced their own *capon*, fed it with *machacao* (toasted dried bread) mixed with carabao milk before slaughtering, believing that the meat would be tender and milky. Come to think of it, our roast *capon* tasted that way.

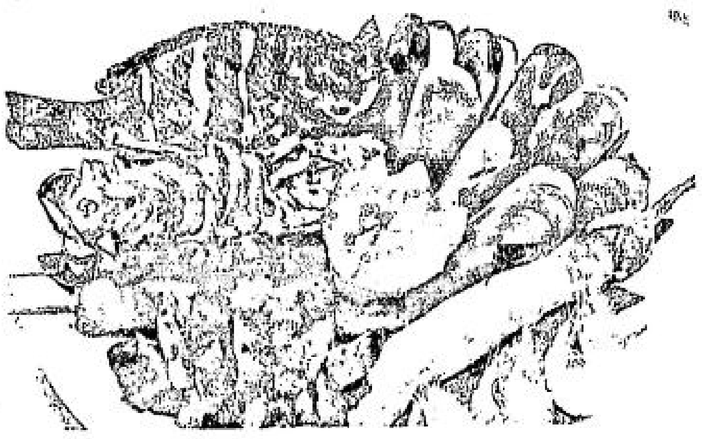
My recollection of that time was of my grandmother preparing ham. Some years she had tough, salty Chinese ham that she boiled several times but always served thinly sliced. It was not a young girl's kind of ham. More to my liking was the American-style ham, which was more tender.

Lola scored the ham fat with crisscross lines, forming diamond patterns. At each line intersection she pressed in cloves (*clavo de comer*) before baking. After baking, the outside was then strewn with brown sugar which was caramelized by pressing a hot *sianse* on it, the process know as *plantsa*.

Perhaps what remains of that menu is the fruit salad. We still use canned fruit cocktail and peaches like she did. Only Nestlé's cream would do, thickened by chilling and then stirred quickly to add volume.

The salad is still presented the same way, some of the cut cherries and peaches reserved to be put on top, the peaches patterned like a wheel.

I suppose the fruit salad remains because all the ingredients can still be had. The other dishes have disappeared from our Christmas tables because the main ingredient, like the *capon*, are no longer sold. And ham today can be bought already prepared, boiled, baked and glazed.



PANTALAN Maynila Restaurant offers Inihaw Fiesta, a large platter of grilled *tilapia*, squid, *liempo* (pork belly), pork barbecue, mussels, eggplants and prawns served with a special vinegar dipping sauce. The restaurant, which is at the corner of South Road and Parade St., Rizal Park, Ermita, Manila, is open daily, 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Call 4004371/4004442.

Party of five pays for four

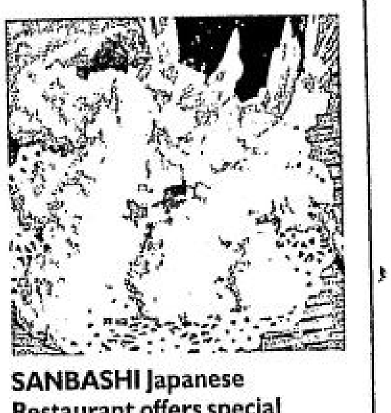
DINING OUT

THE LJC GROUP'S ANGHANG Restaurant offers the great Anghang Lunch Buffet for only P395+ per person, available Monday to Friday. The buffet includes two kinds of soup and noodles, four appetizers, two vegetarian platters, three salads, six main courses, carvery and five desserts. The Anghang Lunch Buffet also has a free lunch offer. For every party of five, one dines for free. Anghang is at 1900 M. Adriatico, Malate, Manila. Call 5220403.

RESTAURANT Le Bellevue at Diamond Hotel offers a Christmas Special Course Dec. 1-31. There's baked pumpkin soup, the steak tartar, grilled *pampano* as main dish. End your meal with Trilogy, a concoction of imported chocolates sprinkled with mango sauce. Call 5283000.

CHATEAU 1771 El Pueblo makes partying at home effortless and virtually fuss-free with the takeout holiday haute cuisine. Chateau 1771 El Pueblo prepares two original treats which can be ordered in advance, taken home and served just in time for Noche Buena or Christmas-day lunch. There's the restaurant's famous Beef Osso Bucco and the flavorful Salmon and Vegetable Lasagna. Call Vicky Rose Pacheco or sous chef Martin Algarra at 6317340/41, or 0917-8660422, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

DUSIT Hotel's Benjarong Royal Thai Restaurant offers five special a la carte dishes from Dec. 12 to 23. For Dec. 24, 25, 31 and Jan. 1, Chef Tun has prepared a Christmas set-menu for the whole family available for lunch and dinner. Call 8673333.



SANBASHI Japanese Restaurant offers special meals including bento meals. Sashimi, sushi, prawn tempura and *yasai itame* are all fresh and flavorful, prepared simply to retain freshness. Sanbashi is at South Road (T.M. Kalaw Avenue) cor. Parade St., Rizal Park, Ermita, Manila. Call 4006757.

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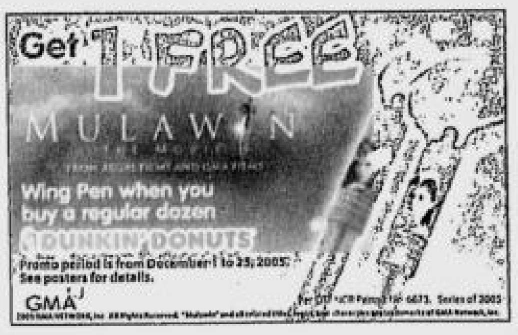
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GMA

Nobody does buffet better

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

IN THE PAST MONTH AND A HALF, I HAD two pleasant encounters with chef David Pardo de Ayala. On both occasions, he got the chance to do what he does best—that is, for him to cook and make us happy!

It was during my good friend Miriam Balingit's 50th birthday that I first experienced the genius of the man at the helm of the Discovery kitchens. The Columbus function room, on the 42nd floor, overlooking the whole of the metropolis, was where and when I was first thoroughly impressed by De Ayala's food.

For appetizers we were served: Fresh-Shucked Aklan Oysters with Assorted Toppings, Classic Salad Nicoise with Black-Pepper Seared Tuna, Grilled Focaccia and Tomato Salad with Goat Cheese, Spicy Asian Tofu with Sweet Pickled Cucumbers, Basmati Rice and Cilantro Salad with Greek Kalamata Olives, Marinated Mozzarella Cheese with Champagne Grapes and Honey Mustard, Assorted Tagaytay Greens with Homemade Dressings.

The soup: Roasted Tagaytay Tomato Soup served with Country Rolls and Bread Sticks.

Our entrées: New Zealand Mussels Linguini with Creamy Saffron Sauce, Spicy Mustard-Roasted Chicken Diable with Potatoes Boulangere, Basil-Crusted Grouper Fillet, with Summer Corn, Roasted Garlic and Chives, Summer Pork Roast with Sweet and Sour Red Cabbage and Balsamic Jus, Linguini Puttanesca, Asparagus with Brown Butter and Parmesan, Classic Pilaf Rice, Australian Beef Tenderloin Roast with three sauces.

And for dessert, the Sweet Seasons Table filled with Espresso Panna Cotta, Mango Cheesecake, Chocolate Terrine with Custard Sauce and Pistachios, Granny Smith Apple Cobbler with Spice Cake and Seasonal Fruits.

Gustatory adventure

I kid you not but everything was delicious! I have not had a fill like that in a long time! What David has mastered is the art of laying food on chafing dishes without a bit affecting its quality. The chicken remained juicy, the pasta al dente, and the fish as tender as the moment it was taken off the pan. And that Chocolate Terrine with Custard Sauce is a decadent memory that continues to linger in my mind!

Through the gustatory adventure, Vince Lahorra was on his saxophone, Joey Casal on his piano and Arthur Manuntad, the Tony Bennet of the Philippines, crooned to Sinatra, Monroe and, of course, Bennet, way deep into the night. What a magical evening!

De Ayala took such good care of us that we decided there could be no better place to launch the book, "Kitchen Rescue Vol. 1," excerpts from the Philippine Daily INQUIRER, than the Columbus function room. The venue would give us all that we wanted—ambience, magnificent food and competent service to delight all those who would be kind enough to grace it.

And what a brilliant choice it turned out to be! Two weeks down the road, people are still raving about the food, especially the Sugar and Spice-Roasted US Angus Short Plate! The chef gave me his word that everything would be perfect and, indeed, perfect it was!

To my newfound friend David, for all you've done, especially for sharing your talent, love and passion for good food, thank you very much! I am pleased our paths have finally crossed and know that I wish you all the best!

Next time you have a party, think Columbus at Discovery Suites (6352222), Arthur "Tony Bennet" Manuntad (0920-9209051) and saxophonist Vince Lahorra (0917-3402844).

And to my other dear friend J. Gamboa (8108735), thanks to you, too! Orders for your *paellas* are well on their way as well! Both the Cirkulo (duck, pork and chorizo) and the Montaña (Portabella mushrooms) were fabulous!

All wrapped up

I am an avid reader of Kitchen Rescue. I love everything that is wrapped in spring-roll wrappers and deep fried. Can you share a *lumpia* and *turon* recipe?

Thank you and more power to kitchen rescue.

BETH

Did this *lumpia* for "Romancing the Stove," an event for the Young President's Organization, and it was crunchy! And of course, delicious, too!

YPO Lumpia

3 tbsp oil
2 tsp garlic, minced
½ c onion, chopped
½ c carrots, julienne
½ c shrimp, shelled, de-veined
½ c chicken breast, cooked and flaked
1 c *ubod*, julienne
½ c green onions, chopped
1 c *buko* meat, shredded (choose young *buko*, as with all things, the younger the better!)

Seasoning:
1 tbsp oyster sauce
1 tsp chili sauce
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp *patis*
¼ tsp black pepper
lumpia wrapper

Saute ingredients. Add seasoning. Add *buko* last, off the fire. Wrap in *lumpia* wrapper. Deep fry.

Dipping sauce:
1 tbsp garlic paste
3 tbsp sugar
fresh chilies, sliced, to taste
¼ c *sukang* Iloko
½ c *buko* juice
salt and pepper

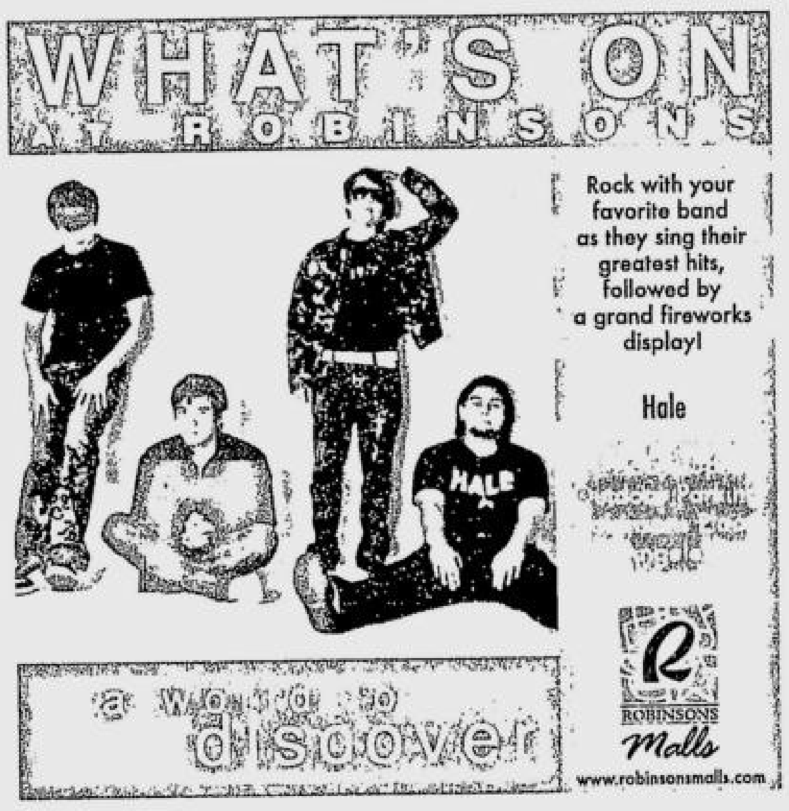
Mix to combine. Season to taste.

Turon tips and tricks, next week!

For comments or suggestions e-mail raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

DAVID Pardo de Ayala

What David has mastered is the art of laying food on chafing dishes without a bit affecting its quality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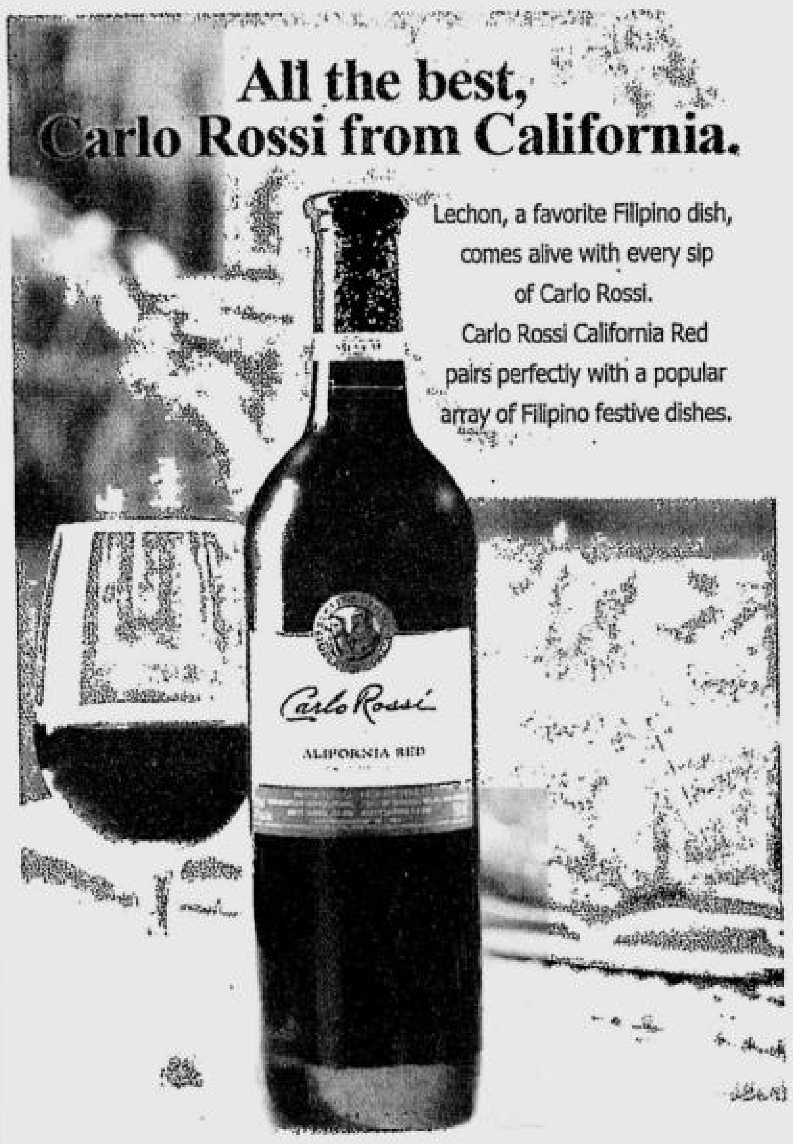
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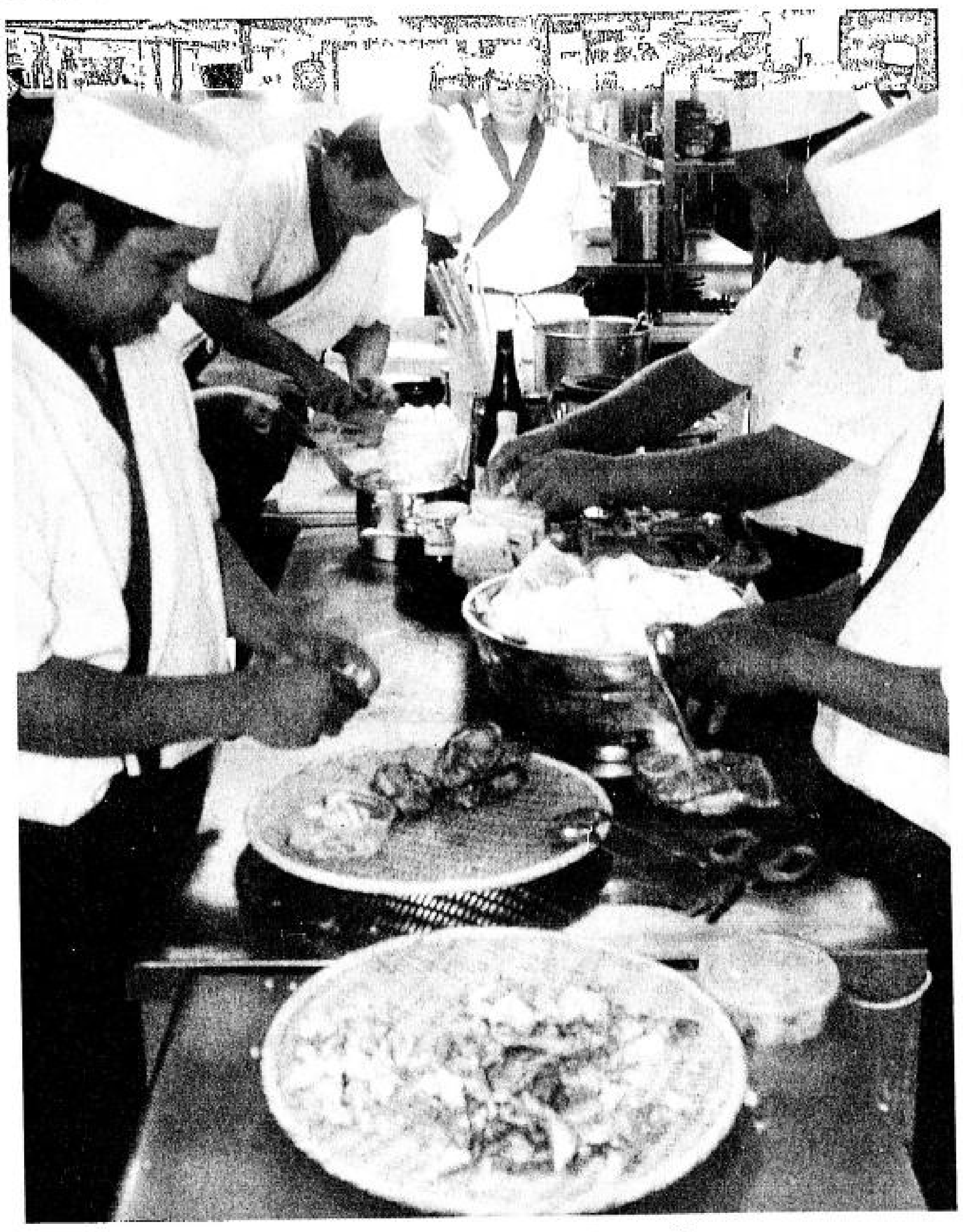
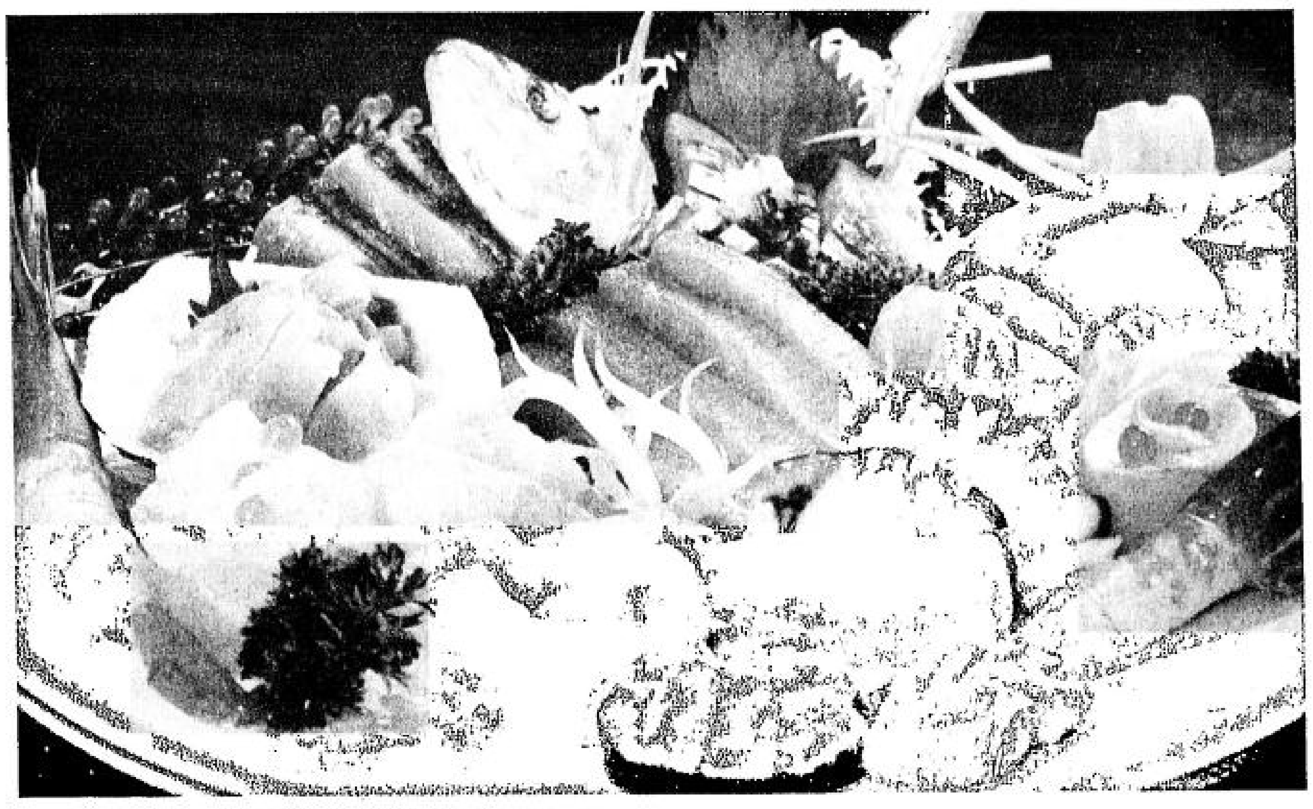
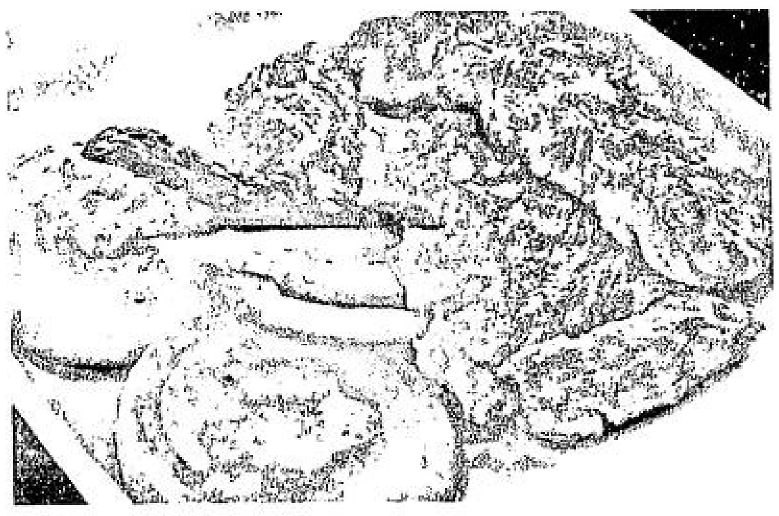


Tsumura places a high premium on authenticity of ingredients and flavors.



A MEDLEY of sashimi items



BEEF Tenderloin

New place, same authentic flavors

Despite moving to a new location, Tsumura continues to adhere to standards it set in its old address

BEEF Usuyaki

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

TSUMURA IS PERHAPS ONE OF the newest fine-dining restaurants serving authentic Japanese food to open in Makati's Central Business District. But the name is not new to countless patrons who trooped to its old address on Pasay Road for almost 25 years to savor its fresh sushi and sashimi.

Named after Japanese sushi chef Masamichi Tsumura, the restaurant has expanded its menu after moving to a bigger place at 2/F 88 Corporate Center, Sedeño cor. Valero Streets, Salcedo Village (8874848). Tsumura is owned and managed by Japan Gourmet Inc., the same outfit behind Kuretake fine-casual restaurant at the Power Plant Mall.

In keeping with the sushi chef's vision of serving only authentic Japanese sushi, Jasper Go, chief operating officer of Japan Gourmet Inc., has limited the restaurant's offerings to traditional Japanese food such as *chawanmushi*, sashimi and beef *usuyaki*, to name a few.

The latter, which consists of tender slices of beef garnished with garlic and mushrooms, is one of the restaurant's top sellers. Sashimi offerings include sea bass, yellow jack, salmon, big-eye tuna and herring roe, among others.

Modern interiors

The contemporary so-called fusion dishes may have no place in the restaurant, but the interiors designed by architect Ed Calma are anything but traditional. In lieu of *tatami* mats, flimsy Shoji screens and intricate Japanese paintings, the restaurant features a series of solid, geometric ceilings, picture windows, indirect lighting and dark, heavy walls.

"We wanted something different," says Go. "So we asked Ed to come up with a look that's contemporary with subtle touches of Japanese elements."

Apart from its famous sushi dishes, the restaurant now serves a complete lineup of Japanese staples and seasonal items such as *matsutake* (pine mushroom), fresh oysters and *ankimo*'s liver (angler fish) imported from Japan.

In its desire to give customers more choices, the restaurant also offers sashimi dishes made from such local staples as *lapu-lapu* and *sayuri*. The sushi chef has to give up golf for the time being to go to the Seaside Market twice a day, Monday to Sunday, to buy fresh fish.

"He never relies on delivery," says Go. "He wants to see for himself how fresh the day's catch is."

To those who prefer the familiar and those on the run, Tsumura offers several complete meals in more affordable bento boxes.

The restaurant also has an extensive list of Japanese sake, from the extremely pricey Kubota Manjyu (P16,500 per bottle) to the more affordable—but still expensive—Kubota Hyakuju (P4,500 per bottle).

Second home

Tsumura, the sushi chef, now works with fellow Japanese Yoichi Kimura, who takes care of hot dishes prepared in the modern, 200-sq m kitchen. Both chefs have found a second home in the Philippines. Tsumura is married to a Filipino woman and has decided to live in the country for good.

Like most creative people, says Go, Tsumura has "almost zero entrepreneurial ability." He was content to make the best sushi in town in another Japanese restaurant until Go's dad, Jimmy, asked the sushi chef to join him in the new restaurant he planned to open.

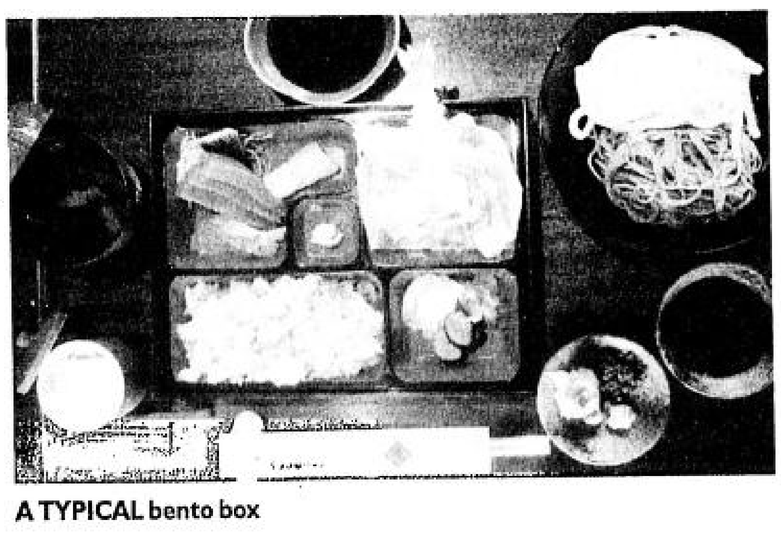
"The restaurant specialized in raw and grilled items," says Go. "Since the old place was small, we were constantly under pressure to accommodate customers who always had to make reservations."

The lack of seats has now become a thing of the past, as the new Tsumura, which can accommodate up to 160 people, has a separate sushi bar and several private rooms that can be opened to create a larger space for bigger functions. The open-dining area can seat up to 50 people.

Reservations are encouraged, but they're not yet necessary. Parking is no problem, as the building provided several slots for Tsumura's guests. Clients in chauffeur-driven cars can get off on the second-floor driveway that leads to the restaurant's main entrance.

Despite moving to a new location, the restaurant continues to adhere to standards it set in its old address. The tradition the sushi chef and his collaborators started lives on at a bigger and hopefully better Tsumura.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph



A TYPICAL bento box

OPEN dining area offers a view of Makati's Central Business District.

Christmas 'take-out' gifts

IF YOU ARE STILL THINKING about what to give friends and loved ones, check out The Legend Villas' Christmas Take-Outs.

LEGEND Villas' Filipino Fruitcake

The hotel offers this December muffins, nutty fudge, double chocolate delight and assorted tartlets in special Christmas packaging.

Try Filipino dessert favorites at Lola Maria, the hotel's coffee shop and restaurant, like Brazo de Mercedes or Brazo de Maria filled with *ube jalaya*. The hotel also offers the 700 g Filipino Fruitcake made of dried local fruits and ingredients; chicken and pork empanaditas, ensaymada and tuna turnovers.

For large parties, there are the Maya Maya Monserrat, Pancit Palabok, Pata Jamon, Salmon al Horno and Pork Barbecue.

Visit The Legend Villas at 60 Pioneer corner Madison Sts., Mandaluyong City, or call 6331501 to 10.

Here's the Filipino Fruitcake recipe that you can prepare as a gift:

Filipino Fruitcake

300 g assorted dried local fruits
100 g glazed fruit mix
100 g raisins
80 g glazed *kaong*
50 g orange peel
1 c rum (used for fruit soaking)
50 g cashew nuts/pili nuts
½ c dayap rind
180 g flour, all-purpose
2 tsp cinnamon
150 g butter
120 g brown sugar
3 pcs whole eggs
1 jigger rum (for brushing)

Combine glazed fruits, dried fruits, raisins, *kaong* and peel. Soak the fruits in rum for one week. Beat the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl, until light and fluffy. Add the eggs slowly on a medium speed beat. Sieve the flour and spices together. Add the flour gradually on a low speed.

After one week, drain the fruits and dust with a little flour. Add to the flour mixture. Give the mixture a final turn with clean hands to mix thoroughly.

Transfer mixture into two lined baked pans. When desired weight is required, weigh accordingly and place mixture in the right baking pan. Bake in 300°F oven for 2 hours. Brush cake with 1 jigger of rum. Wrap in foil and let age for one week before consuming.

ASSORTED pastries

Not-so-fun side of 'tiangge' shopping

THE CONSUMER
Marietta Velasco Giron

LIKE MOST WOMEN, I love going to the *tiangge*, and how! Only a few pleasures in life will match the thrill of going from stall to stall in search of good buys.

And the best part of it all is haggling and getting the item for the price you want.

However, there's a downside to *tiangge* tripping that may spoil all the fun. The Bureau of Product Standards (BPS), an agency of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), recently issued a warning that this bargain paradise was teeming with substandard and hazardous products.

Tiangge operators also didn't issue receipts and neither did they put price tags on items they sold.

The DTI-BSP explained these were blatant violations of the Consumer Act.

For all its noise about substandard and hazardous products in *tiangges*, the DTI-BSP has not done anything to keep the products in question from being sold to consumers. We can only rationalize and take this to mean the agency does not have the power to swoop down on *tiangges* and seize the substandard products.

But let's give the agency credit for its public information drive about product safety. In one of its advisories, the agency advised *tiangge* customers to be specially wary of unsafe products like toys that could hurt children; electrical items that could overheat, burn, or cause electrocution; counterfeit batteries that could leak toxic acid; and Christmas lights that might cause fire.

"Be meticulous and make sure that the product is safe," the DTI-BSP advised.

For more information on product safety, as well as for advice on how to file a complaint for violation of the Consumer Act, here are the DTI hotlines: 7513330 and 8965740 (landline phones); www.i-reklamo.ph (for Internet); text DTI <space><message> and send to 2920 (for Globe/Smart cell phones) or 2384 (for Sun Cellular). Send letters to DTI-Reklamo, DTI, 361 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City.

Safety tips

Here are some tips from DTI-BPS on how to ensure your safety from substandard Christmas lights:

- When buying Christmas lights, inspect the product carefully.
- Look for stickers bearing the PS (Philippine Standard) mark on locally manufactured products, and ICC (Import Commodity Clearance) mark on imported lights. The marks are proofs that the products passed standard safety tests required by the DTI-BPS.
- Check old Christmas lights at home for exposed wire, disjointed wire, and melted or broken insulation (material that wraps around the wire or cable).
- Tighten any loose bulb.
- Tinsels or metallic décor, are conductors of electricity. Keep them away from exposed wire or an opening in a loose light bulb as they can spark and cause fire.
- Keep in mind the following when setting up Christmas lights:

a. Follow the instructions on the package.

b. Christmas lights for indoor use must not be used outdoors.

c. When connecting a series of Christmas lights, do not exceed the recommended number of sets (ideally, three sets) to avoid overloading the electrical outlets.

On the rise

Please don't think twice about reporting illegal electrical connections and pilferage to the Manila Electric Company (Meralco Kuryente Watch hotline, 6328989). This is the plea of Jose Ricky Tan, chief of Meralco's metering services and security office.

He explained that electrical pilferage was one the major reasons for frequent power-tripping and current fluctuation in neighborhoods. It also caused power interruption or "brownout," and worse, it could lead to fire.

Signs of illegal connection are: broken or tampered meter seal, presence of jumper wire, hole in the meter case, altered meter base, tampered internal parts of meter, and use of any other unusual device that interferes with the normal function of the electric meter.

Another type of illegal connection, according to Tan, was tapping directly into a Meralco transformer or secondary wires.

Tan disclosed there had been a notable increase in reports of electrical pilferage. "Public support is very encouraging. People now realize that we are all affected by these illegal connections and that decreasing the systems loss due to pilferage also helps lower electricity rates."

He added that more than 5,000 cases were reported between July and September this year.

E-mail the author at mvgiron07 @yahoo.com

CULINARY WINNER
Noel Buenaventura, a graduate of the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management, De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, won in a cooking showdown in Orlando, Florida. Now studying at Le-Cordon Bleu Paris-School of Culinary Arts Miami, he was a member of the winning team at the 2005 Food Expo organized by the American Culinary Federation.

Help educate a young child this Christmas

PLAY SANTA THIS CHRISTMAS FOR children in Starbucks' adopted barangays.

SparkHope, a project started by Starbucks in November last year, aims to provide children in remote and impoverished communities with sustainable early-learning programs. It raises funds to provide equipment for barangay daycare centers, playground and, recently, for pre-schools, as well as training of daycare workers.

It is a partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) Philippines, a leading advocate of the importance of early education.

The Philippines has a high dropout rate in the first grade.

Dr. Nicholas Alipui, Unicef representative to the Philippines, said the early years were crucial since most physical, mental and emotional abilities were formed during this time.

Starbucks customers can play Santa for children in SparkHope barangays by buying special Unicef cards sold in the stores. Each recipient of the card will have a donation made in his/her name and will enjoy a complimentary cup of Crème Brûlée Latte.

Customers can also join the SparkHope Toy Drive. Starbucks stores will have bright red boxes where customer can drop their toy donations.

Proceeds from the sale of limited-edition giant Starbucks mug will also go to project SparkHope.

A donation to SparkHope will also be made for every Starbucks Traditions 2006 Planner redeemed.

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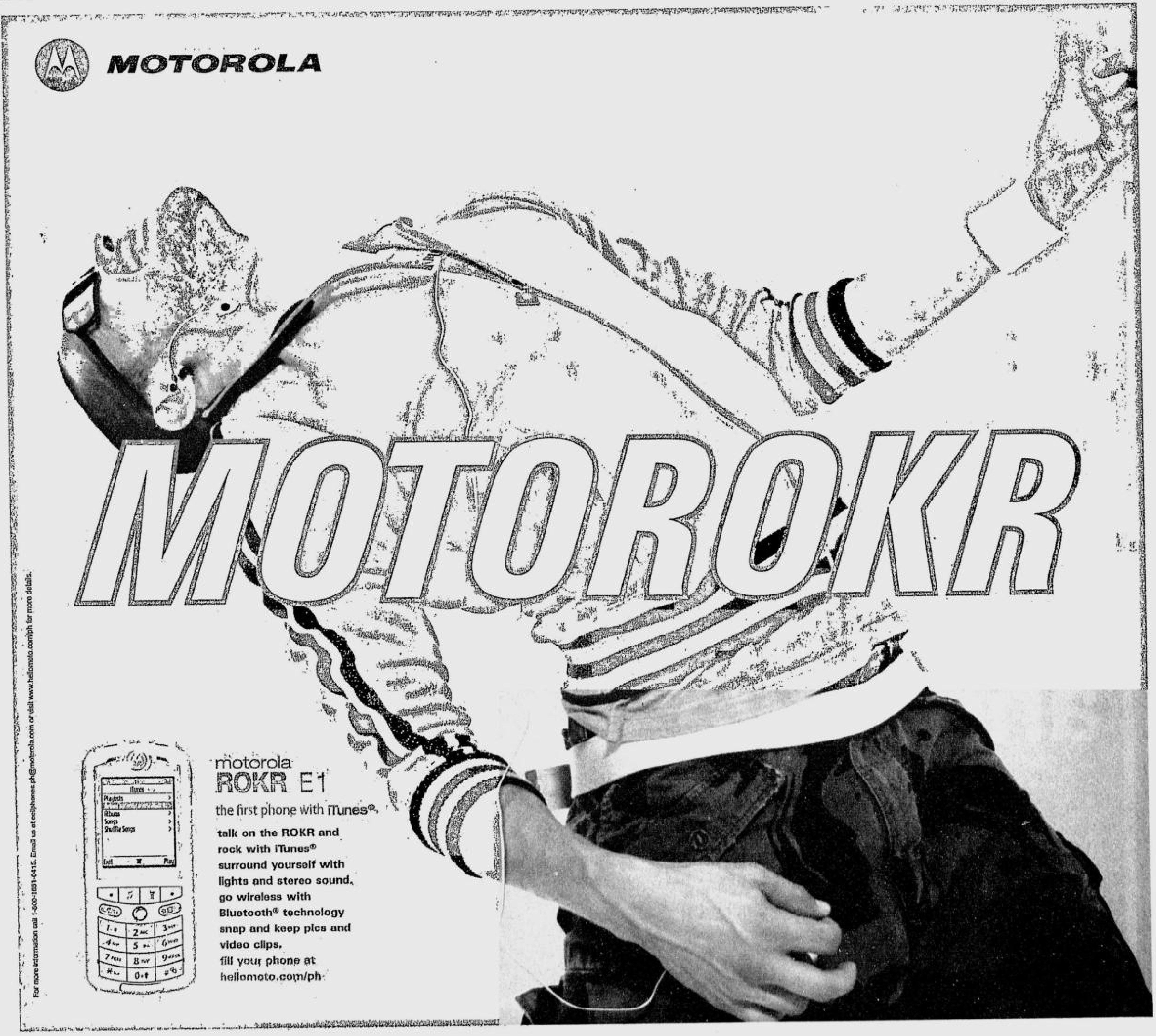

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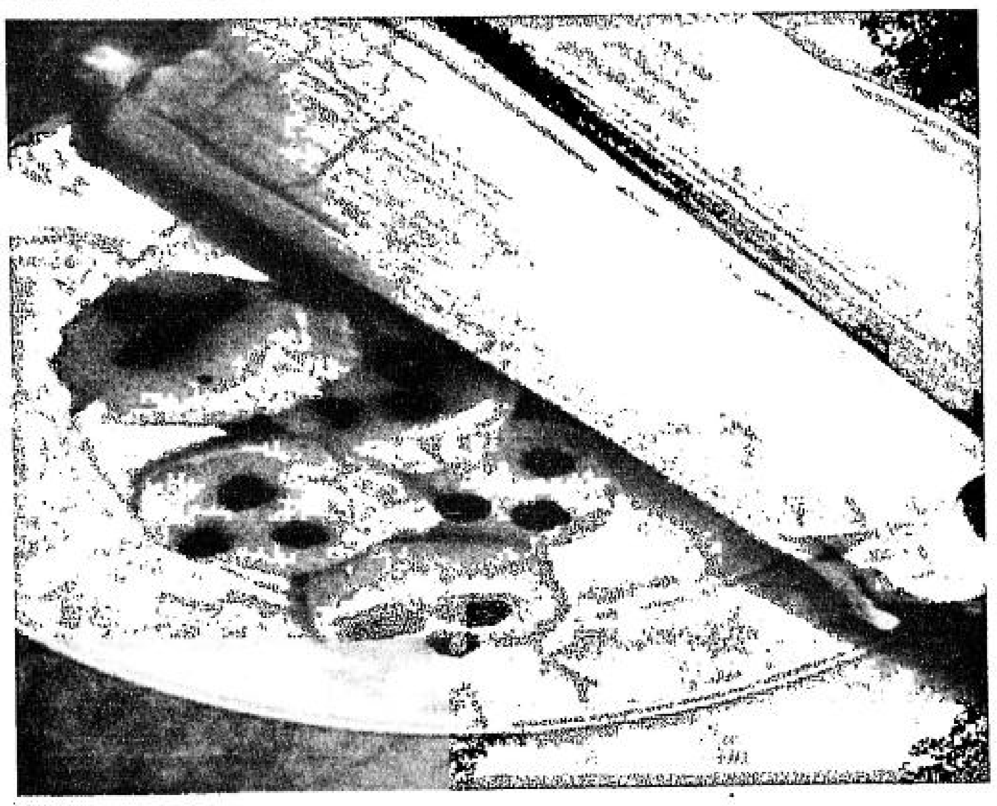


TINUBONG

Improving on a classic

PDI FAMILY RECIPES CONTEST

By Cherllisa Tagalan

ONE OF THE DISTINCTIVE Ilocano dishes is *bibingka*, a native delicacy which consists primarily of *malagkit*, with cheese and coconut milk added occasionally.

But some Ilocanos, especially those in Northern Cagayan, have come up with some innovations to make the *bibingka* even more unique. The rice cake is placed in *tubong* (a section of bamboo), hence the term *tinubong*.

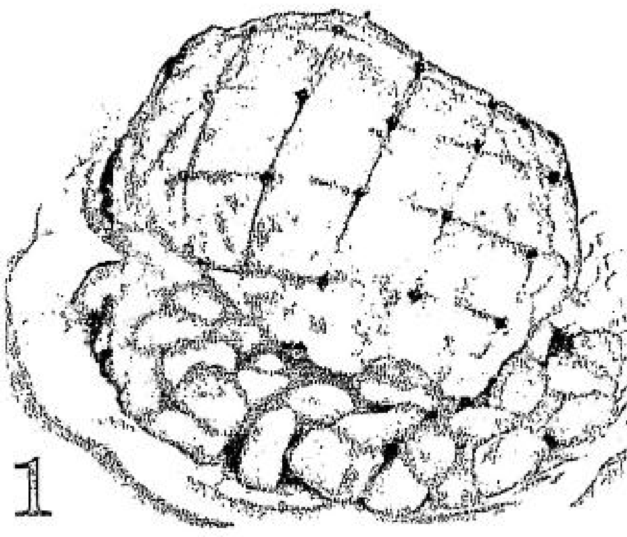
My grandfather made his own version of *tinubong* even more different by adding condensed milk, vanilla and coconut milk. This made our *tinubong* distinct from others. After five generations, the tradition of making *tinubong* lives on in our family.

This native delicacy has helped strengthen the bonds of many Ilocano families. During Christmas, it is common to see in many homes family members working together to produce *tinubong*.

Tinubong

1 k ground *malagkit*
1 l water
1 k sugar
2 c condensed milk
5 tbsp vanilla

Mix sugar and ground *malagkit* in a liter of water. Add condensed milk and vanilla syrup then mix. Put the mixed ingredients in the *tubong*. Fill only half of the *tubong* since *malagkit* expands when heated. Cover the *tubong* with clean, dry banana leaves. Cook the *tubong* in low fire.



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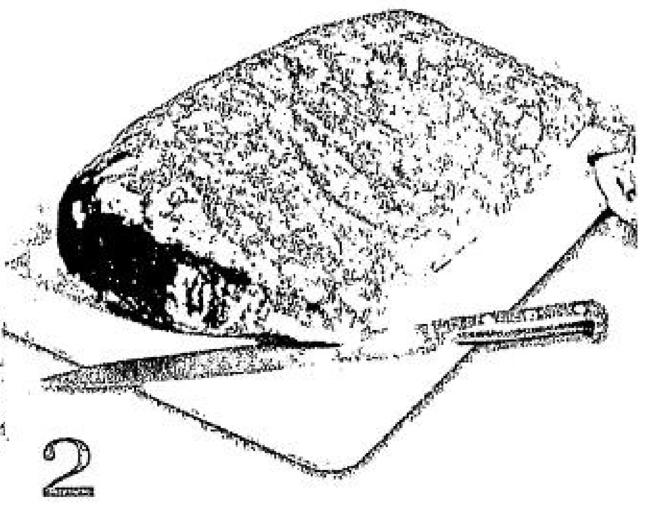

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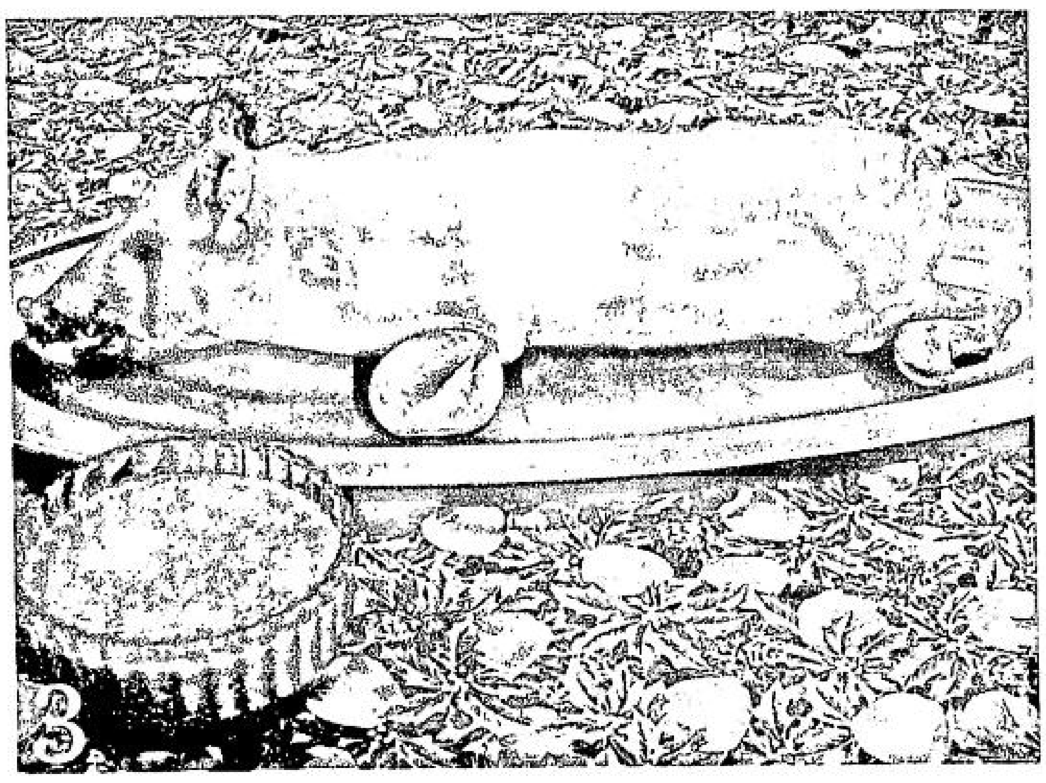

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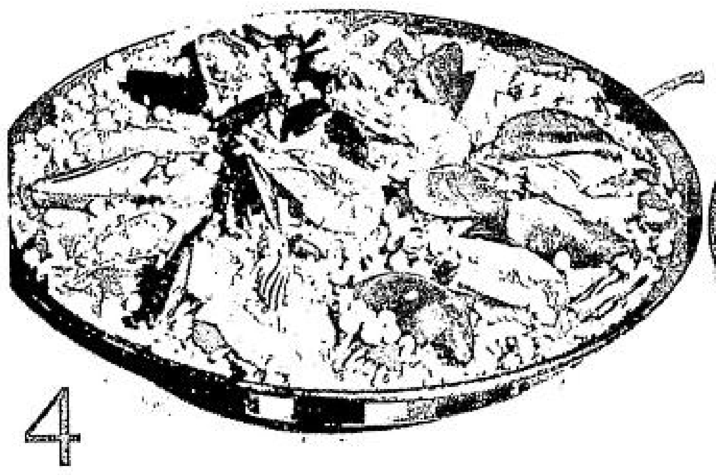

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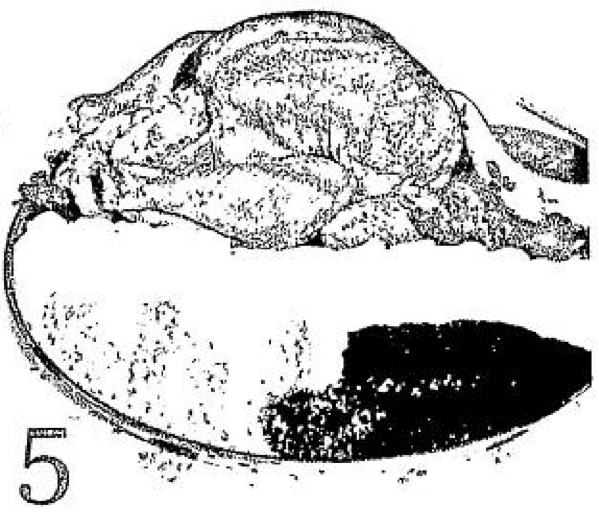

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HOLIDAY SPECIAL
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